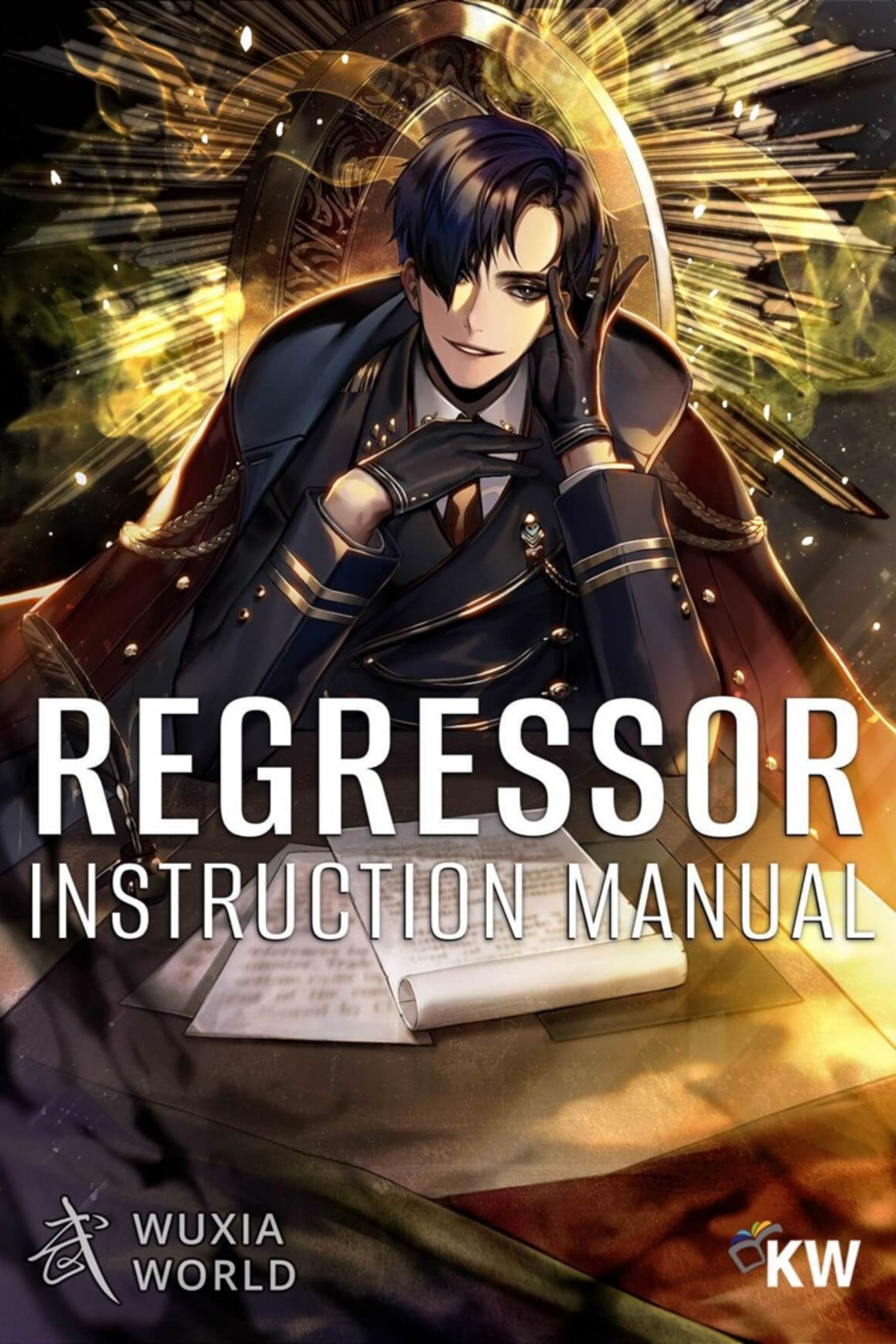
REGRESSOR
INSTRUCTION MANUAL
WUXIA WORLD
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REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL

– 회귀자 사용설명서 –

- VOLUME 11 -

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[WUXIAWORLD]

CHAPTER 503
WHAT HE WANTS (1)

"I honestly don't know if this will work. It'll be easier if he's an ordinary human, but the human whose dream you're trying to enter is on the same level as me, so it'll be difficult to enter his dream. Even if you manage to enter his dream, there's a high chance that you'll be pushed out immediately. It can also be dangerous. In real-world time, it'll be one hour, and in dream-world time, it'll be the whole day," Lonovera explained.

"Are you saying that one hour in the real world equals one day in the dream world?" I asked.

"That depends on the adjustments, but… the max time I can give you is about three days. I don't have anything else to caution you about, but I can't guarantee anything, so I'm embarrassed for not telling you this confidently. Of course, based on that human's condition, it should be possible, but the mind of a high-ranked human isn't easy to penetrate…" she replied.

"I think it's worth a try. He looks even more confused than I thought," I said.

"I think it's going to be difficult," she remarked.

"Let's try it, anyway."

I could still remember what Lonovera said worriedly about how it wouldn't work. I assumed that Lonovera had overestimated Kim Hyun-Sung's mental state, but I didn't expect that I would be able to enter his dream this easily.

His consciousness opened like an automatic door to me, and it didn't reject my intrusion.

Actually, it felt like his mind was urging me to enter.

The process was so smooth that I was sure that Lonovera was confused.

'I'm not sure if I should consider this a good thing.'

It was nice that I managed to enter, but this meant that Kim Hyun-Sung was simply *that* unstable. I looked around, and the scenery made me worried. Kim Hyun-Sung's consciousness was like a wasteland enveloped in darkness.

The darkness in his consciousness was darker than Belial's darkness, and my heart cracked when I saw him cowering in a space like this.

He started crying the moment he saw me, and it was absurd, but the Kim Hyun-Sung in front of me wasn't the Kim Hyun-Sung I knew.

He was in the worst-case scenario, but he still looked handsome, which annoyed me.

Of course, I was happy to see him. He definitely felt the same because he was staring at me in disbelief—no, I actually couldn't describe his expression.

'Did he come back to his senses?'

Perhaps because I was in his consciousness, but it felt like he had come to his senses faster than I expected. His heroines had failed, so I thought I would fail as well, but it seemed that it wasn't the case.

Of course, it wasn't really strange. After all, I was the reason behind all this, so it wasn't weird that he started coming back to his senses the moment he saw me standing in front of him.

I thought this was going to get a lot easier because I had one hour in the real world and three days in this world, which should be enough time to take care of our lovely regressor's mental health.

"I don't know what to say," I said.

"*Ah…"* Kim Hyun-Sung rubbed his eyes.

"It's been a long time." I continued.

"*Ah… Uh… Heuk…"*

'Does he have aphasia? What's wrong with him?'

"*Ha. haha*…" I laughed.

"*Ah… Euk… Kgh…*"

He looked as if he wanted to say something, but his emotions were overwhelming him because he couldn't speak properly. I felt embarrassed while he was trying his best to suppress his moaning and groaning.

"…"

He looked sad but happy at the same time. I was looking forward to a touching moment. I was hoping he would come and hug me tightly, like what Park Deok-Gu would have done if he were in Kim Hyun-Sung's shoes.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung looked as if he was trying to suppress himself.

He could have turned away because he was embarrassed to show his tears, but it was really Kim Hyun-Sung-esque for him to stare at me intently as if he was afraid that I would run away.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"…"

'I shouldn't leave him until he calms down.'

He couldn't talk because his emotions had overwhelmed him.

'I'm thankful because you're always thinking about me. Man, why didn't you say anything? I had no idea that you were thinking about me that much… '

"Are you feeling better?" I asked.

"…"

I couldn't say that he had calmed down, but he looked better than before. When I took a step forward and cautiously reached out with my hand, I saw him crying once again.

He was flustered, but after collecting himself, he grabbed my hand and stood up.

“I’m… I’m sorry…” Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

‘Man, don’t cry again.’

“I-I’m… sorry,” he stuttered.

‘You’re not a crybaby.’

“You don’t have to apologize like that since it wasn’t your fault,” I told him.

“B-But… but…” he said.

“Let’s go for now since we can’t stay in this place,” I suggested.

He looked puzzled.

‘Let’s hurry and get out of here. You need to break out of your shell.’

However, it seemed ineffective, so I had to think about a few things.

What was the right thing to do here?

‘What should I do?’

I wasn’t sure if I should urge him to move, ask him what he was doing, or comfort him. If those wouldn’t work, then was I supposed to yell and ask him to save me?

I had no choice but to be cautious since his mental health was at its lowest.

If the reason why he was avoiding the situation was that he was afraid of fighting, then urging him to move would affect him negatively. If he was scared that something bad would happen to me, then screaming for help could affect him negatively as well.

It would be even more dangerous if he thought that I could die because of his mistake.

Kim Hyun-Sung had come to his senses for a second, but he was extremely unstable to the point that a single trigger could easily make him lose his mind again.

In addition, he was crying too much for me to fix him up with a few knuckle sandwiches.

'I do have a lot of time.'

I didn't think that it would be bad to observe him for a few hours. I wasn't sure if he was aware of my complicated feelings, but he was looking around with a faint smile.

He was confused about where he was right now, and it seemed that he had no idea what he was looking at.

"This place… I see. So that's what happened," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'What do you mean?'

I was confused, but I quickly knew what he was talking about.

'This guy, he can't tell the difference… '

He couldn't distinguish between the reality and the world in his consciousness.

"It's all over. All of it…" he continued.

He thought that everything had ended while he was in dreamland. I was confused about how a person could think that way, but I quickly understood after looking around for a bit.

We were in a ruined city enveloped in darkness.

I wasn't sure, but I assumed we were in…

"Lindel…" I said.

"Yes, I think it's Lindel. In the end… this time as well… M-More importantly, what happened to you, Mr. Ki-Young? How… did you regain consciousness? The demons, no—in the end, they…" he trailed off.

"…"

"I see. It's all over. Asking these kinds of questions…"

"…"

'Shit, what should I tell him?'

The answer here was to remain silent. I wanted to say something, but I started having complicated thoughts when I saw the ruined city.

This was what our past life looked like, and this was what the continent looked like after it was destroyed. This was a memory of Kim Hyun-Sung's past life that his consciousness had created. I saw this place through Kasugano Yuno, but it had been a while since I saw this place.

I had no idea how Kim Hyun-Sung survived Lindel's destruction and what happened that traumatized him.

Anyway, I found him pitiful.

The fact that he could still see this sight in his unconscious meant that he still couldn't move on from what had happened in his past life, even though the world in his past life had already been destroyed.

'He's really making me worried.'

More cracks appeared in my heart when I saw that he seemed comfortable in his place.

Of course, he wasn't happy, but he looked as if he was no longer carrying a heavy burden on his shoulder.

"I'm not sure if there are items that are still intact, but let's go in for now," he suggested.

"…"

'The Blue Guild's Guild House.'

It was an unfamiliar sight. Everything was destroyed, so I couldn't really make out what I was looking at. There was a portrait of someone unfamiliar to me, and I also saw items that I had never seen before.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he still had no idea what was going on.

He entered the kitchen, seemingly excited.

When he emerged, he was carrying a few items with him.

“There are still items that are intact, so we got lucky,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“That’s…”

“I’m not sure if you’ll like this. There isn’t much left, but we might find more items if we go to the Red Mercenary Guild or to the Black Swan Guild. Since it’s late, let’s sleep here and start moving tomorrow,” he suggested.

“Is there a place to lie down here?” I asked.

“Don’t worry, Mr. Ki-Young,” he said.

‘Hyun-Sungemong, it’s nice to see you again.’

He went somewhere and brought out a bed. He had to be really strong, even in his consciousness, because I saw him carrying an entire massive mattress by himself.

He punched the mattress, creating a cloud of dust that made him cough repeatedly. The sight looked pretty cute to me, and he looked surprised as well. He probably didn’t think that the dust on the mattress would land on his face.

Thanks to his efforts, the ruined guild house became a decent place to stay. We couldn’t use a cleaning spell since magic didn’t exist here anymore, but we managed to clean up by moving here and there. I got the feeling that our living conditions were improving little by little with every movement. I thought we could live here for a few days.

There was canned food on the table and an intact bottle of cheap wine.

He sat next to me like a kid, and I couldn’t help but laugh when I saw him pouring wine for me. Of course, it wasn’t because I was having fun. It was simply because his actions looked unnatural.

“Did you think of something funny?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“No, it’s not that… The situation is just a bit funny. You seem really relaxed despite the current situation…” I replied.

“There probably aren’t any survivors here. Even if we explore, I’m sure we won’t find anyone,” he said.

“I see…”

‘There’s no way that he hasn’t noticed yet.’

It would have been different if it were someone else, but this was Kim Hyun-Sung we were talking about. I was sure that he had long noticed that this place was constructed based on the details that he could still remember from his past life.

In other words, this guild house was in his past life.

There were picture frames depicting the images of people who were unfamiliar to me, and the interior was a bit different. There were many unfamiliar items, and I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung definitely knew those items.

The building was in ruins, but it wouldn’t make sense that Kim Hyun-Sung still hadn’t noticed the difference.

‘He knows… ’

This guy was already aware that he wasn’t in the real world.

‘You have no intention of getting out of here.’

“And that is why he has been denying it,” I said.

Kim Hyun-Sung was smiling at me innocently.

CHAPTER 504
WHAT HE WANTS (2)

"And that is why he has been denying it," I said.

"Me? I'm not denying it. I'm sure you still have no idea, but… there really aren't any survivors. You'll be able to see it yourself when we head out tomorrow. It's not only Lindel, but Celia, the Republic, and the Union of Kingdoms as well. Of course, you won't be able to find any members of the other races as well," Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

"I wasn't talking about—"

"I understand that there are a lot of things you don't understand right now since you just woke up, but… I'll explain everything. I should've explained this to you a long time ago, but first—Yeah, I'll make sure to explain everything slowly and as fast as I can. Please rest for a bit," he interrupted.

"So…"

"I'm sure it's hard, but please don't worry…" he said.

'How can I not worry? You're suffering from escapism, man.'

It was clear that my words weren't going to reach him. It looked like he had already decided to accept the ongoing situation outside, and it was so absurd that I couldn't help but laugh.

The fact that he seriously thought about how the two of us could live on a ruined continent startled me. It seemed like he wasn't thinking about his current reality at all. He believed that this place was better than confronting the ongoing situation outside.

'What are you so scared about, man… '

I couldn't understand why he had gone this far just to fool himself. If he was aware of

the fact that this space was his own construct, then it was highly likely that he was thinking that I was one of his constructs as well.

He was basically putting on a show for the *imaginary* Lee Ki-Young.

I thought of the possibility that he knew I had infiltrated his mind, but Lonovera had told me that it would be difficult for him to notice that I was an invader.

If he knew that I wasn't an illusion but the real Lee Ki-Young, then I was sure that he wouldn't act like this nor deny the truth just to keep me here.

'Do you really have to go this far, Hyun-Sung?'

I thought I had given him enough time to rest, but it seemed that it wasn't enough. Actually, it was more like he had given up on everything. I knew he was in serious condition, but his condition was more serious than I thought.

It was to the extent that I felt like giving him a punch or two.

I wasn't sure how he was going to respond because his mental health was unstable.

However, I had to make him aware that the world in front of him wasn't the real world.

'How much time do I have left?'

An hour in the outside world was three days here. Naturally, I wasn't planning on staying here for three days because I was worried about what Park Deok-Gu would do after being overwhelmed by emotions.

Before anything else, I decided to play along. I wasn't sure if I could actually taste the food and drinks here, but when I drank the wine quietly, Kim Hyun-Sung started talking, which was unlike him.

The majority of the topics were useless. He talked about the old days as well, but he mentioned some fun stories, too.

"Do you still remember… the first time we met?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"I do. It reminds me of the fact that you've changed. I thought you would be more

cold-hearted… To be honest, just a few years ago, I had never imagined that I'd see you smiling," I replied.

"I'm kind of embarrassed," he commented.

"…"

"I never thought I'd change this much either, but it's understandable that you'd feel that way. If I hadn't met you, I'm sure I wouldn't have changed at all. Basically, I'm kind of bad at communicating…" he continued.

"I didn't feel that way," I said.

"Really?" he asked.

'No, you're really bad at communicating, man.'

"Yes, but if that's how you really felt, then I'm sure you're not the only one who felt that way. The guild members…" I trailed off.

"You're right, Mr. Ki-Young," he said.

We started talking about our first meeting.

"I was really surprised when you gifted me a griffon," he said.

"*Ah*, that was when I had just returned from the capital. I was worried that you wouldn't like it, so I didn't expect that you'd like it that much. I honestly never thought that you'd enjoy festivals or festival items. To be honest, I was kind of relieved. Anyway, I was really surprised because of Miss Jo Hye-Jin…"

"*Hahaha*. Really?" he laughed.

"You have no idea how startled I was when you suddenly appointed her as your secretary," I answered.

"I-I'm sorry about that…" he stuttered.

We started talking about many things. We talked about the time I gifted him a griffon, we talked about stories related to Jo Hye-Jin, and we talked about the times we went

out after expeditions. Of course, we also talked about the serious incidents.

They were all stories that the two of us could laugh about. It hadn't been that long since we met, but we had spent a lot of time together, so we had many things in common.

We continued talking, and it was also a way for me to grasp his overall condition. Soon, it was morning, and I hadn't even laid on the bed that he had made for me just yet. At this point, I felt like giving up as I watched him talk.

To be exact, I played along with him by nodding.

'All right, do whatever you want, man.'

I wasn't sure if there were any fish, but we went fishing together and wandered around Lindel with the goal of finding survivors. Obviously, we didn't find any survivors because this was a world that his consciousness had constructed. I saw what remained of Lindel, and the places that had been razed to the ground caught my attention.

This was his past life. It was the world where Jung Ha-Yan had hung herself. Kasugano Yuno died here as well, along with all living beings, including Sun Hee-Young and Cha Hee-Ra. It would be strange if I weren't curious.

We walked while looking here and there, and we eventually ended up in a place where we could see all of Lindel. Kim Hyun-Sung started talking as soon as he noticed that I was trying to catch my breath.

"Are you okay?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"I'm… *ha…* a little tired…" I mumbled.

It seemed that my stamina was still low even in this world. Damn it.

"*Ah*, then let's rest here for a bit, or we can stop here and call it a day. After all, we have a lot of time on our hands. There might be wild animals in the forest, and if we get lucky, we might even find a griffon. How about going there tomorrow?" he suggested.

'Wild animals, my ass!'

“I don’t know. More importantly, I’d like to look around this place more or maybe… go to Laios…” I muttered.

“That place is probably worse than here. Here, drink some water,” he offered.

“Thank you.”

“Are you done catching your breath?” he asked.

“Yes, thank you. There really isn’t anything here. I don’t hear anything either…” I mentioned.

“Yes, it’s really quiet,” he agreed.

“…”

“Mr. Ki-Young,” he called out.

“Yes?”

“I think humans are really strange,” he started.

‘That’s random.’

“Everything has been destroyed, but everything kind of looks pretty and mysterious. The red sunset…” he trailed off.

“…it’s definitely picturesque. I thought it would be completely dark, but it looks like the sun still exists.” I pointed out.

“It didn’t rise once. I honestly haven’t seen anything that could be considered a light source, but you’ll be able to see a red sunset like this one during certain hours. *Ah*, when you leave a certain region, you can also see stars. Since we didn’t see any stars yesterday, I think we should go see them today. We do have to walk for three days before we get there, and since you’re tired, we should just go see them next time,” he explained.

“You seem to know more than I thought. How long have you been alone in this place?” I asked.

“I’m not sure. I don’t think it’s been that long,” he answered.

‘Yeah, right.’

There were things I could see through my Mind’s Eye, and I noticed traces of the things that had been created recently. I was sure that he created those traces unknowingly.

It was obvious why he made them…

I wasn’t certain, but there was a high chance that he remained by himself in this world.

I wasn’t sure if it was right before he regressed or if he remained in this place for a long time, but I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung had stayed here for a long time. I didn’t know if it was days or years, but he had definitely been watching the sunset from this place.

I was sure that he had made sure to watch the sunset every day because it was the only phenomenon and the only change in this world that had allowed him to see things clearly in this dark world.

Did that mean that all of mankind disappeared? How did Hyun-Sung survive? There was a high chance that Altanus had protected him. In other words, were the things I was seeing right now the things Kim Hyun-Sung had seen before his regression?

I wasn’t sure, but there was a high chance that it was the case.

I was receiving so much new information that it was starting to give me a headache. To be honest, I wasn’t ready to accept any of those. I already had a lot on my plate, and his stories weren’t what was important right now.

I was sure that it wasn’t just me, but I felt as if the emotions he felt back in his past life were inundating me.

‘The dangers Lonovera had mentioned… ’

I wasn’t sure if it were one of those, but I started crying for some reason. Kim Hyun-Sung looked away from the red sunset and asked cautiously, “M-Mr. Ki-Young? Are you okay? Why… Why are you suddenly…”

“It’s nothing,” I replied.

“…”

“It’s nothing,” I repeated.

“But right now…”

“Damn it! It’s really nothing!” I shouted.

“…”

“…”

“I’m sorry. I was too—”

“It’s nothing, so… don’t worry too much. Really…” I interrupted him.

“…”

“…”

“Mr. Ki-Young,” he called out.

“Yes?”

“I told you yesterday that I had something to tell you… There’s something I’d like to apologize for—”

“You don’t have to,” I said, interrupting him again.

“Excuse me?”

“You don’t have to apologize,” I said.

“What do—”

“I’m sure it wasn’t your intention to tell me about it like this, damn it,” I interrupted.

Kim Hyun-Sung bit his lips. I obviously knew what he wanted to tell me. He was

definitely going to tell me that he was a regressor, and he was planning on ending it with that.

I was sure that he wanted to be freed from the burden he was carrying by abandoning it. He had definitely been thinking about it for quite a while now, and in the end, he decided to avoid it.

He wanted to avoid taking responsibility, he wanted to run away from his mistakes, from the truth, and avoid situations where he could possibly lose his comrades, close friends, or even his lover.

He had decided to let go of everything because he couldn't endure it anymore, and he decided to use my appearance here to let go of everything.

My headache was bothering me, but I wasn't going to accept his ridiculous apology.

'I worked hard to raise you, but you're actually trying to run away? You have to stay and carry me.'

The world here was constructed by his own consciousness, and it was a ruined world, so it was understandable that he was scared and was trying to run away from everything. Of course, I wouldn't let him run away that easily.

"You're not going to go out?" I asked.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"You know what I'm talking about. You're going to stay here like this? You're really going to let things end this way? You dumbass. What are you so scared of that you're staying here like this? You already know the truth," I said.

"…"

"You know that all is fake," I said.

"…"

"You noticed it as soon as you came back to your senses earlier, you bastard," I continued.

There was a dull noise, and I stumbled backward until my back collided against something solid. I looked up and saw Kim Hyun-Sung glaring at me.

'This bastard… '

CHAPTER 505
WHAT HE WANTS (3)

I wasn't scared. Kim Hyun-Sung was frowning, but he wasn't trying to harm me nor did he look threatening.

Actually, he looked kind of sad, so I couldn't look straight at his face.

In addition, I wasn't exactly happy about this situation where I was pushed against a wall.

Eventually, the glaring Kim Hyun-Sung lowered his head. His trembling shoulders told me what he was feeling. He neither denied nor agreed, but I could feel that he didn't want to accept it.

I frowned slightly as if I was in pain, and he stepped back, seemingly surprised.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he had no idea what to say.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Bullshit…" I commented.

"Let's stop for today…" he suggested.

"Stop what, man? I want you to look straight into my eyes. Are you really going to end everything here?" I asked.

"I don't think you're fully conscious," he said before turning around quietly and gathering his belongings.

"You're the one who's out of your mind, not me." I pointed out.

I started getting angry because I somewhat understood his feelings.

"You look exhausted," he remarked.

“Don’t change the subject,” I told him.

“…”

“…”

“Why are you saying this?” he asked.

“You know that better than I do, Kim Hyun-Sung,” I answered.

“I’m tired, so I don’t want to do this any longer. I don’t want to talk about that anymore. Please stop,” he requested.

“You’re not tired. You’re running away. You really want to rot here for the rest of your life?” I asked.

“That’s none of your concern,” he said.

“What about the people who look up to you?” I asked.

“Please… stop…” he mumbled.

“You’re just going to let them die?” I questioned.

“I don’t want to see them die. I don’t,” he replied.

“They’re going to die in places you can’t see. If you don’t wake up, that’s what’s going to happen, you loser,” I told him.

“*Yes, I already failed once, so even if I leave this place, nothing will change. What happened will happen once more, and I don’t want to be there. I don’t want to see everyone die once again. Criticize me all you want, but I’m not confident that I can endure it, so please stop. There have been too many changes that I can’t keep track of things anymore,*” I mocked, imitating him.

“It’s all because of you… Mr. Ki-Young,” he said.

“Things changed because you saved me, idiot. No one asked you to carry the heavy burden all by yourself and to just watch people die. Don’t act like everything is over just because you slipped once. I don’t plan on letting things end here as well…” I

continued.

“I told you to stop it!” he screamed.

“Stop what?! You crazy bastard,” I yelled.

“Damn it! What do you know?! You know nothing!” he screamed once again.

“…”

“Damn it, damn it! Don’t mock me. Stop it. Shit! Why did you come here to give me all those burdens?! Please stop it. I never said that I wanted to start over, and I didn’t wish to start over, so leave me alone! Please… stop! Just leave me alone! Don’t give me any more burdens! You bastards…! Stop it… shit…!” Kim Hyun-Sung cursed.

“…”

“Please don’t even think about it… please… please don’t. Please don’t make me remember it… I’m tired of it now. Please don’t… Don’t make me remember anything…” he begged.

“…”

“Please stop… please… please don’t put those burdens on me while looking like him…”

Kim Hyun-Sung had gone crazy, and I couldn’t quite describe it. I was surprised that he yelled at me all of a sudden, but I didn’t think that he was yelling at me.

He still wasn’t aware that I was the real Lee Ki-Young, so he was definitely yelling at me, thinking that I was just an image that his consciousness had constructed.

He seemed like he was thinking that his unconscious was telling him to carry the burdens and take responsibility using Lee Ki-Young’s image.

In other words, he was yelling at his own consciousness to stop forcing him to take responsibility.

He was also telling his consciousness to forget his burdens and responsibilities…

'Did he think that I'll talk about something else with him if he were to forget his burdens and responsibilities?'

It seemed that he thought that way.

Kim Hyun-Sung remained silent. He stared at me wordlessly, seemingly trying to read my expression. At the sight, I couldn't help but acknowledge the fact that half of my assumption was correct. However, I wasn't going to play along with him. It was up to him to make the decision, but I still had to look at him once more.

"I have never forced you to take responsibility," I said.

"…"

"But you should at least clean up your mess. Don't you agree?" I asked.

"…"

"What? You think you created me?" I questioned.

Kim Hyun-Sung's expression changed abruptly, and he stared at me in disbelief.

"*Ah…*"

"…"

"*Ahh… Ah…*"

'I'm not sure if that worked… Shit.'

It was honestly a gamble. I wanted to play along a little longer, but it felt like all this would last forever if I didn't put an end to all this right now.

The emotions within me were the reasons I got impatient, and I thought that this was the best time to end things.

I was honestly a little worried.

I was worried about explaining how I managed to reach him, and I unknowingly thought about the remarks I had made again.

I had made some dubious remarks, and I was sure that they would be strange from Kim Hyun-Sung's point of view, but it seemed like he didn't have the luxury to think about those things right now.

"*Ah… Heuk… heuk…!*"

'This guy is crying again.'

I wasn't certain, but he seemed as if he was more relieved than suspicious of me.

He was relieved by the fact that I was safe and that I had come here to look for him.

'Damn it, man… You shouldn't have lost your mind like this.'

I initially thought that he wasn't too far gone yet, so I thought that the efforts of the guild members and his harem members had fallen into deep ears. However, it seemed that he simply couldn't hear them from the deepest recesses of his consciousness.

I couldn't help but mourn for Jo Hye-Jin.

Still, I smiled because I realized that the air around him had changed.

Kim Hyun-Sung was definitely aware of the fact that this wasn't where he belonged.

"Y-You're… still here. You're… still here…" Kim Hyun-Sung muttered.

"…"

"Did you come to find me?" he asked.

"Because I knew you would be like this," I told him.

"I must seem… pretty untrustworthy," he commented.

"Not at all," I said.

"Are you okay now?" he asked.

"You can say that I'm kind of in a dangerous situation right now, and coming here

was like gambling for me," I replied.

"I must've acted disgracefully," he said.

"I understand," I said.

"I'm sorry," he apologized.

"No need to apologize," I told him.

"…"

"No one has ever told you to take responsibility, and no one has any right to tell you that. I understand that people's expectations can feel a bit burdensome sometimes and that it's difficult to endure things when they're too heavy to bear. There's no need to feel stressed all by yourself. We can carry the weight together," I explained.

'That was a nice line… '

I started to feel motivated. I cringed for a moment, but so what?

I didn't care as long as it would work on him.

I wasn't sure why Kim Hyun-Sung cherished me so much, but if I had to find a reason, it was probably because of this…

"I'll take responsibility," I said.

It was probably because I had never forced him to take responsibility or carry any burden.

At last, I could finally see Kim Hyun-Sung's genuine smile.

He grabbed my hand and stood up.

'Now, Lonovera. I think this is the right time! Do it now. Right now! Damn it!'

The red sunset was no longer shining on us.

"It'll be difficult to understand, but…" Kim Hyun-Sung paused.

“Yes?”

“Up until now, I thought the view I was looking at was the sunset. However, the sun doesn’t exist here, so the red sunset was just in my mind, and I kept on believing it,” he continued.

‘Our Hyun-Sung is sentimental… ’

“But… that doesn’t seem to be the case,” he added.

The red sky would appear during sunset and sunrise. Normally, the sun would rise from the east and set in the west, but there was no way a ruined world like this would follow that kind of law.

Anyway, the Dark World version of Kim Hyun-Sung seemed like he didn’t expect that phenomenon to happen during sunrise, but his thoughts weren’t strange. Who would look at that and think that the sun was rising?

Well, it could be the case as long as that person was used to seeing a cursed red light during sunrise in their own world.

‘Actually, there’s a chance that the sun never rose again once the world in his first life was ruined.’

I was satisfied seeing him looking at the light that was shining on his face, but for some reason, I started to feel bad because Lonovera had created that phenomenon.

‘The truth isn’t important.’

His emotions were more important than anything else.

I squinted at the bursting light, and the damaged buildings started to collapse one by one. The light started to spread as if it was going to completely destroy the burdens in Kim Hyun-Sung’s heart by completely erasing the traces of his past life in his consciousness.

Of course, this was all part of the play, but it was honestly a sight to see.

I actually couldn’t help but think that this show would help him shake off a bit of the burden in his heart.

Amidst all this, he started marching toward the light.

I could see dark hands trying to hold him back by grabbing him in places that the light couldn't touch just yet, but Kim Hyun-Sung ignored them and continued walking in silence.

Eventually, he threw himself into the fake light while holding my hand.

Seeing that, I knew that it was time to wrap this up, so I let go of his hand.

However, he actually turned around and stared at me in confusion.

"I can't leave this place," I told him.

"*Ah…*"

"Aside from me, there are people waiting for you out there," I added.

'Why is this guy hesitating? Get out of here.'

"B-But…" Kim Hyun-Sung stuttered.

'This idiot. Are you really not going to leave? Just leave already.'

"But…"

'Just leave, man.'

I pretended to be sad, but inside, I was feeling desperate.

Lonovera had to have realized that things were going wrong because she improvised by creating figures. She created a scene where Park Deok-Gu, Jung Ha-Yan, and the other guild members were reaching their hands out toward him.

'This isn't right, Director Lonovera. Ah, this is too cheesy… This isn't some old-school cliche. This is… '

"Bro, hurry up and come out. We have to fight together!" Park Deok-Gu shouted courageously, but his line made me blush out of embarrassment.

“Hyun-Sung o-o-oppa… Hurry up and come back.”

It was Jung Ha-Yan, one of our original party members from the tutorial dungeon. I wasn’t sure if it was because they were created on a whim, but their expressions looked unnatural. It wasn’t just them—familiar people were all waiting for him.

“Guild Master.”

“Oppa.”

“Mr. Hyun-Sung.”

The three heroines who had suffered a total of thirty-eight defeats.

Ahn Ki-Mo, Sun Hee-Young, Hwang Jung-Yeon, and the rookies.

The people he had established connections with—from the Sacred Democratic Country to the Republic—each and every one of those people were there.

In addition…

‘Why is she here?’

Lee Ki-Yeon was smiling at him as well.

The sight made me realize that Lonovera had gotten desperate, and I couldn’t help but feel a bit nervous.

‘You think something like this will work?’

She was ruining my plan.

I was worried that Kim Hyun-Sung would notice the incongruity.

“M-Mr. Hyun-Sung, you’re… you’re not… alone.”

In the end, I had no choice but to participate in Lonovera’s cheesy play, which caused me to mess up my line.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung became emotional when he heard me, so it was clear that

he still hadn't realized that all this was fake. He was the protagonist of this play, so he probably didn't think that all this was cheesy and cringey.

To make things worse, the words he said were words that a typical protagonist would say, and hearing his words made me bite my lips.

"Right. I'm not alone… right now."

'Damn it… it's a miracle.'

Of course, the sight in front of me wasn't actually a miracle.

The true miracle here was how Kim Hyun-Sung had fallen for this cheap production.

I sighed in relief, and I tapped his chest with my fist.

"I'm sure we'll meet again. And…" I trailed off.

"Yes?"

"I trust you," I continued.

"Yes, no matter what, we'll meet again," he said.

He smiled brightly and threw himself into the light.

He looked the happiest he had ever been as he threw himself into the light.

Left alone, I clenched my fists. A small issue occurred by the end of the play, but the awakening cliche was done to near perfection.

"*Pffft! Heh… Hahahahaha!*"

I laughed unknowingly after imagining something fun.

"Let's gooo! To El Dorado—the city of gold…!"

CHAPTER 506
KIM HYUN-SUNG'S AWAKENING (1)

- Advisor Lee Ki-Young.

'…'

"Let's gooo… to El Dorado… the city of gold…" I mumbled.

- Advisor Lee Ki-Young!

"Lets… gooo…!" I shouted.

- Advisor Lee Ki-Young!

"*Ah…'*

I opened my eyes upon hearing a voice calling out to me. I felt like I had slept like a log, but waking up felt unpleasant. However, I clenched my fists upon recalling what had just happened.

'Did I succeed?'

It was definitely a different feeling. The world in Kim Hyun-Sung's consciousness was pretty realistic, but reality still felt the best. I clenched my fists and finally realized where I was right now. I was still in the carriage.

'I succeeded… '

I was kind of worried about what would happen afterward, but I thought that it would be good enough to say that I had succeeded without any issues. I wanted to enjoy this a bit longer, but I didn't have the time to do that. I had to figure out the current situation. I wasn't that worried because I was sure that I didn't use up the entire hour, but I still looked outside.

I was in such a hurry that I even forgot the existence of the magic holograms in front

of me. The moment I stuck my head outside the window, I immediately saw that the base was in a mess.

It seemed that it had been quite a while since the battle started.

- *Roaaaaaaaar!!!*

“Hold out!!! Endure it!!!”

“Fire! Fire! Fire! Mages, prepare to use your spells. Do it until you’ve exhausted your mana! Don’t retreat no matter what! Don’t retreat! Damn it!”

“Don’t retreat! Don’t retreat! Do not forget that Goddess Benigoa is still with us! Fight until you cannot! We can’t let the dirty demons take away the light of our continent!”

Craaaaaaaaack!!

Booooooooooooom!

“Don’t let them come up here! Don’t let them climb over the wall! No matter what…!”

- *Aaaargh!* You dirty humans!! How dare you!!!

‘Wow, they’re holding out better than I thought.’

I felt a bit relieved. My mind was still hazy, and I wasn’t sure whether I was dreaming or awake. However, the scene in front of me was definitely real, so my hazy mind started to clear up.

I sighed in relief and looked to the side.

I saw Lonovera plugging her nose.

“Miss Lonovera?” I called out.

- *Ah*, I-I’m sorry, Advisor Lee Ki-Young. I think it’s because I saw something really provocative.

‘What the hell is she talking about?’

I stared at Lonovera again, and I finally realized why she was plugging her nose. She was trying to stop a nosebleed.

However, that wasn't the only detail that caught my eye.

Her face was really red, and she was trembling.

I couldn't help but wonder about what she had been doing.

'So that's why you managed to come up with those cheesy lines…… '

I wasn't planning on blaming her right now because the plan was a success. The stage she had created on a whim was helpful as well. I nodded when I recalled the terrible performance earlier.

Lonovera looked at me worriedly.

- Were you not… satisfied?

'What the hell is she talking about? Not satisfied about what? That's right, damn it. The performance was disappointing.'

"No, it's nothing. More importantly… please give me a brief overview of the current situation," I requested.

- *Ah*… okay, okay. W-Well, it's been forty minutes since the battle started. The humans are still holding it out. The humans are holding out better than I thought, so I have just been observing the battle.

"Is Hyun-Sung still missing?" I asked.

- Yes. I think it'll take more time.

"How long?" I asked.

- It won't be that long. Unlike you… t-that human has been unconscious for a very long time, but you don't have to worry too much. It's highly likely that he'll come back to his senses in an hour at the latest. Of course, it could be sooner than that. Usually, it will take about a day, but since he's a high-level human…

'One hour... '

Could they hold out until then? I couldn't say for sure, but it should be possible.

It was impressive how they were pushing the demons back using the standard siege warfare tactic. I could feel their desperation.

They were fighting as one, but Park Deok-Gu was standing out.

'That pig is pretty impressive.'

- Let's hold out for as long as we can! We just have to hold out a bit longer until reinforcements from other bases arrive!

It was difficult to explain, but it felt like the atmosphere had changed because of him—no, it actually changed. He was emitting an unknown buff that enveloped the entire army.

I wasn't really expecting much from him, but it was clear that he had grown a bit.

He still wasn't that good in combat, but the way he stood in the midst of the army and raised the morale of the troops while trying to stop the advance of the demons reminded me of a paladin in a holy war.

No, we were actually in a holy war because the ongoing battle was between the continent and the demons trying to take over the continent.

Cha Hee-Ra was fighting a hard-liner high priest on the same level as her, and it was the same for the others. I couldn't help but feel proud seeing the Blue Guild grouped up and taking care of an entire defensive line.

An hour ago, a few of the guild members looked confused, but now, they were fighting with renewed vigor. I was pleased by their efforts. Of course, I was still worried, but I was worried about the fact that the situation was progressing too smoothly.

'There needs to be some sort of crisis... '

"This could be a bit more dramatic..." I mumbled.

At this rate, the Blue Guild and the troops at the 17th base would succeed at repelling the demons without Kim Hyun-Sung's help. Unfortunately, it would be their mistake if they were thinking that way.

The battle continued, and I noticed that the troops of the 17th base were getting pushed back. It was all because Donovan had finally joined the battle. After all, Donovan was a named demon, even among the 27th Legion.

Honestly, I was getting tired of seeing him charge his way through the battlefield. With every swing of his fist, dozens of people would fly away, and every time he moved his feet, the surroundings would tremble.

I was sure that he was a sore eye in the eyes of the people defending the 17th base.

The 17th base should create a special task force soon, but I figured that they didn't have the luxury to pull out and retreat because I could see Park Deok-Gu stepping up to stop Donovan from advancing.

He wasn't there to win. Park Deok-Gu was there to hold out.

The way he raised his shield to block Donovan's attacks reminded me of David when he stood in front of Goliath. Park Deok-Gu was tiny compared to Donovan, so I couldn't imagine how overwhelmed he had to be feeling right now.

Donovan punched while Park Deok-Gu blocked the punch.

Park Deok-Gu had already abandoned his sword to focus on defending, but he still looked anxious, which made me nervous as well. However, I could see that he was doing a good job holding out.

- How fun! Human! You're fun! You scummy human!

- *Whooo… whooo…!*

Park Deok-Gu was obviously not in the best condition.

Elena and Sun Hee-Young had combined their powers to buff him, but there was still a clear difference in strength.

I was sure that Park Deok-Gu himself knew that his body was breaking down and his

injuries were accumulating, despite that, he remained steadfast.

I couldn't help but feel sad seeing Park Deok-Gu standing in front of Donovan.

Whenever he couldn't receive holy power, he would recover by drinking potions. When it came to attacks that he couldn't block, he would dodge them by rolling away.

The best way to describe Park Deok-Gu right now would be the words—tenacious and persistent.

- *Cough! Cough!*

Park Deok-Gu was coughing up blood. I was sure that his organs couldn't handle the pressure anymore. However, Park Deok-Gu didn't even stop to wipe the blood off of his face as he stood in front of Donovan.

I could see that they were trying to isolate Donovan using Park Deok-Gu for the sake of reaping profits in the other sectors of the battle, but their method of isolating Donovan was too cruel.

Park Deok-Gu had to endure immense pain and stand up again and again.

I wasn't sure, but I reckoned that Park Deok-Gu had volunteered for this. Otherwise, he couldn't have managed to remain standing for so long.

'Donovan. I need to get rid of that bastard as soon as possible… '

I couldn't help but be curious about what Kim Hyun-Sung was doing. I looked at Lonovera, thinking that perhaps Kim Hyun-Sung had fallen asleep again. However, the succubus next to me simply shook her head and remained quiet.

The tides were starting to turn in the other sectors as well. Cha Hee-Ra had to go berserk to keep up with the high priest that she was fighting, and Elena was also running out of holy power.

Meanwhile, Park Deok-Gu was still doing his job, even though the line was getting pushed back.

Unfortunately, the situation had gotten to the point that a time-out was necessary.

I couldn't wait any longer.

'Shit, I can't appear in a situation like this.'

All of a sudden, there was an abrupt change in the multiple magic holograms floating in front of me. A magic hologram was displaying nothing but static.

'Uh… '

I reckoned that there was something wrong with the familiar in Kim Hyun-Sung's room.

The demon in the situation room was confused, but I smiled because the disappearance of the familiar only meant one thing—he had finally woken up.

'He's hereee! He's hereeeee!!!'

"Please give me an overall view of the battlefield," I requested.

- Okay.

It was dramatic, and it couldn't get any more dramatic than this. To be exact, a dazzling light burst from Kim Hyun-Sung's room, and it swept past everyone.

The battle momentarily lulled, and everyone looked up.

'Nice… '

- He's back…

Park Deok-Gu muttered while lying on the ground.

Donovan also looked up at the sky, seemingly confused.

- Guild Master…

Jo Hye-Jin muttered.

Kim Ye-Ri looked down and started crying like a typical heroine while the blood-soaked Park Yeon-Joo smiled.

The despairing guild members yelled and started reorganizing the defensive lines once again. The troops realized that things were about to change, so they mustered as much strength as they could to take a step forward.

The situation had changed. The following scene was a cliche, so an inspirational piece of music should start playing right now.

'El Dorado…!'

- What the… what's going on?

'This is a classic!'

- What's going on? What's… going on?!

'This is very nice. That dialogue is perfect for you, Actor Donovan.'

Donovan had just uttered the line of a typical villain. Confused, he extended his hand toward Park Deok-Gu, but…

- *Aaaaaaargh!*

His arm abruptly flew into the air.

- My aaaaaaarm!!!!!

Even his screams sounded typical…

Park Deok-Gu smiled faintly at the sight.

- You're late, bro…

The figure nodded.

- I'm sorry.

The fully awakened regressor was standing next to Donovan.

It was the perfect royal cliche.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked exactly like the protagonist of a typical Shonen comic that I couldn’t help but cry out to myself. “Damn, he looks so fuckin' cool… Shit…!”

I felt like we were about to break twenty million dollars at the box office.

CHAPTER 507
KIM HYUN-SUNG'S AWAKENING (2)

'I'm so proud.'

Artists would always be excited to see their work being published, and Director Doom Ki-Young was no exception. Goosebumps broke out all over me, and I felt like I had become a child again.

The scene was similar to those in comics where the ally of justice stood in front of the villain after receiving a power-up.

I was relieved to see Kim Hyun-Sung's power.

'What changed? Did he get a new job? How did he awaken? Wait, did he really awaken?'

I would have to confirm it for myself, but it seemed like he earned a Semi-Mythic job. He managed to break out of his shell without Elune or Benigoa's help. His sword was constantly emitting light, so I figured that some of his Mythic skills had been unlocked.

Who could have known that the sword he had gotten from the Rift Museum would be helpful in a situation like this?

'Awakening! Awakening! Awakening! Kim Hyun-Sung's awakening!'

Kim Hyun-Sung looked at Donovan while holding his sword tightly, and his refreshed expression made it clear that he had already put down the heavy burdens that he had been carrying until now.

Heroes fighting with a refreshed and comfortable heart would always be stronger than those carrying heavy burdens in their hearts. The protagonist wouldn't lose, especially when they had an unwavering conviction.

I could see Kim Hyun-Sung taking deep breaths through the magic hologram. I was

staring at him through the magic hologram, but I felt like I was being sucked in.

I knew it…

'I picked the right actor.'

Kim Hyun-Sung was handsome, so he would look good in any situation. In addition, there was another lead actor on this stage. A decent movie needed a decent villain. It was different from my original plan, but the right guy was here.

Actor Donovan had to get beaten up, and he was acting like the perfect villain. Of course, he wasn't actually acting. However, the puzzle pieces were falling into place, so I couldn't help but smile in satisfaction.

- How dare you! How dare you…! You lowly human! You lowly human…!

'Man, I was just wondering why he wasn't saying that line.'

- How dare you! My arm…!

'That's a nice line as well. I would've been sad if you didn't say that line. Seriously… '

- *Whooo…*

Donovan pounced and swung his fists. It seemed like he wanted to show everyone that he hadn't been taking Park Deok-Gu seriously because he mustered enough power to destroy a hill. However, our lovely regressor easily avoided his attacks. The wind that Donovan's fists were kicking up destroyed the surroundings, but Kim Hyun-Sung didn't blink even once. He was reading Donovan's movements.

-…

'How beautiful… '

Donovan was trying to get close while Kim Hyun-Sung was trying to keep a certain distance from Donovan. I was sure he thought that he would get injured if Donovan's fists were to hit him.

Donovan was getting annoyed, and he started waving his arms like he had gone crazy.

Unfortunately, the weakest member of the Four Heavenly Kings could never lay a finger on the protagonist.

The result hadn't come out just yet, but the battle could already be considered over.

There was no way Kim Hyun-Sung could lose.

Kim Hyun-Sung was swinging his sword while dodging.

An experienced swordsman or warrior swinging their weapons would look amazing in the eyes of any layman out there, but Kim Hyun-Sung's movements were simply incomprehensible.

'I feel like he got too strong… '

I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung would be in danger if Donovan managed to hit him, but Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he was trying to test the new power that he had just acquired on Donovan.

It seemed that Donovan had seen through Kim Hyun-Sung's thoughts as well because he started going even crazier with his attacks.

- How dare you trick me…! How dare you trick me, you dirty human…! You're standing in the presence of the great Donovan—a high priest of the 27th Legion! I'll rip you to pieces. I will rip you apart, no matter what!

-…

- I'll do the same for the other humans here. You pesky humans! You pesky humans…! Die—*Aaaarghhh!!*

-…

While I was distracted, Kim Hyun-Sung wounded Donovan's leg.

However, Donovan was still doing his job while cursing, so I had no choice but to thank him for that.

'Goodbye, Novan. Really… this is goodbye.'

- The living sacrifice I'm going to offer to my close friend—*Cough!*

-…

- Damn it! I-I…!

-…

- I won't… be defeated… by a mere human! I can't…! My promise to my close friend… I can't break it…

'Geez, Novan.'

I felt a bit sad seeing him struggle. Rather than going back to hell, he decided to squeeze the final vestiges of his strength. The large-framed demon transformed. He probably used up all the merits he had accumulated so far just to transform here.

Lonovera stared at him as if he was pitiful.

- Idiot… It's shameful that someone like him is my comrade.

Donovan looked as if he had broken through his limits. A demon would usually suffer from a penalty upon being summoned here. However, Donovan used up all of his merits to transform and wield his true power as a Semi-Mythic demon.

I pitied him a bit because I could feel his desperate will to complete his mission, even if it meant resisting the system. However, he was destined to die in the script I had written, so it was unfortunate.

- My friend…!

- He is not your friend.

- What?

- He is not your friend.

'That's right, Hyun-Sung. Damn it, that's it… '

- What do you know? How dare you spout nonsense! You're nothing but a useless

mortal! You know nothing!

- Bastards…!

The conversation ended there, and Kim Hyun-Sung's expression changed.

- I'll kill you all…!

Donovan gathered a large amount of mana—the amount was large enough to make me flinch, and then a massive fist fell from the sky.

If I were to exaggerate a bit, I felt like I was witnessing the nightmare that happened in Laios once again.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung seemed calm as he slowly floated into the air.

'Is he going to use his ultimate move?'

I could tell from the air between Donovan and Kim Hyun-Sung that the two were about to use their ultimate moves on each other.

A fist as big as a house fell from the sky, and Kim Hyun-Sung's sword emitted a light so bright that I couldn't look at it properly.

The red sunset-like light that we had seen before parting ways pervaded the surroundings and drove the darkness away.

The sight was so beautiful that I couldn't find the words to describe it.

'Wow… '

I wasn't sure if it was just me, but the red sunset-like light was so similar to the light we had seen in his consciousness that I couldn't help but assume that he had gotten inspired by that light.

Kim Hyun-Sung bit his lips and swung his Promised Sword of Friendship beautifully.

The massive, dazzling light from the sword drove the darkness away and split Donovan in half.

- *Haaaaa!!!*

- Shiiiiiit!!!!

Kim Hyun-Sung's attack shattered Donovan's barrier, and there was no need to explain what happened afterward.

- I-I… by a… by a mere human…

- *Ha, ha ha…*

- I'm… sorry. My friend… I'm… sorry. Belial…

- *Ha, ha…*

It was a shocking ending to Donovan—who had basically become a symbol of the 27th Legion.

I was a part of the same legion, so I started thinking that I had to get out of here as soon as possible.

However, Act One was over, so it was time for Act Two.

The climax was reached, so it was time to wrap the chapter up.

"Let's head out, Miss Lonovera," I suggested.

- What? Are you…

"No. I should show my face for a bit. I have to tell them their next assignment," I replied.

- What's their next assignment?

"I'm not sure. Now that the continent has regained its final beacon of hope, it's time for them to fight back… We'll withdraw at the right time and prepare for the final battle. That should give them some time to rest and unwind," I replied.

- *Ah*…

“They succeeded in protecting the 17th base, so they’re probably thinking that they have a chance against us,” I added.

Right now, all we had to do was prepare the final showdown with our troops against theirs.

Of course, the upcoming battle was surely going to be gruesome.

It would be a cliched, gruesome, and melancholic battle against the Plaguelord and his friend—the genius swordsman.

However, things would only go that way if I could keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung.

I thought I could do that after becoming the Plaguelord, but it was clear that Kim Hyun-Sung was more powerful than I thought. He had become an even bigger monster than I thought, even though he had just awakened.

It seemed that he truly deserved to be called a genius, and it wasn’t strange that a genius managed to defeat a demon high priest.

‘Should I start working out?’

“…”

‘Should I start doing some push-ups?’

My stats were too lacking for me to even dare fight him one-on-one.

I could come up with a different way, but I thought that it would be a beautiful sight if I fought him, even if it meant getting help from Belial—the lord of many demons.

As a corrupted, I wanted to hear him say, *“Come back! Mr. Ki-Young! Come back to your senses!”* at least once while our swords clashed.

‘I’m sure there’s a way… ’

For now, I had to show my face from a distance. Lonovera was kind of nervous because it had been a while since I showed myself, so I patted her shoulder and showed my face to them from far away.

Of course, I was wearing Doom Ki-Young's mask.

I slowly raised my hand, and the demons retreated like a receding tide.

Lonovera clung to me and smiled alluringly as if she weren't nervous just a few moments ago.

I was sure that they felt relieved.

The battle had ended, and it ended in mankind's first victory.

However, I reckoned that not many of them would start cheering after realizing that they had only defeated the weakest Heavenly King of the Four Heavenly Kings.

In addition, they definitely wouldn't be happy at the thought of fighting Doom Ki-Young—Belial's Chosen.

'That's right, guys. That's how you become stronger. Pain is a blessing for the youth.'

I was really far from them, but I could see them looking at me as well.

I wasn't interested, but I pretended as if I were excited and curious about how a mere human managed to defeat Donovan.

I was the final boss, so I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung as if what he had done wasn't a big deal. I stared at them with indifference, acting like Donovan's carelessness was the only reason for his defeat.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked straight into my eyes.

He clenched his fists and placed his hand over his chest, promising that he would save me by any means necessary.

However, it seemed that the gesture that he had done in his consciousness with me wasn't enough, so he started talking as well.

I couldn't really hear him, but I could read his lips, and I was sure that he was speaking the words I had told him in his consciousness.

"I trust you."

'Ah! I should grab my head here… '

I grabbed my throbbing head as if I were having an internal struggle. Of course, the struggle was brief, and I recovered quickly. I saw Kim Hyun-Sung's hopeful look, but I smiled wickedly at him as if I were enjoying all of these.

'God damn, I'm so charismatic… '

My silver hair fluttered in the wind as I said, "He was the weakest of the Four Heavenly Kings, but I could have never imagined that mere humans could kill Donovan."

-…

"Let's go back, Lonovera. It seems like something interesting is about to happen," I ordered.

- Okay, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

'I was immersed until the very end. Seriously… '

The ending to the first act was near perfect…

CHAPTER 508
A SHORT BREAK (1)

- Let's go back, Lonovera, it seems like something interesting is about to happen.

- Okay, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

'Wow, let's watch that again.'

- Let's go back, Lonovera, it seems like something interesting is about to happen.

- Okay, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

'That was really nice… '

I wasn't the type to be attached to scenes, but for some reason, I wanted to keep replaying that scene. Our staredown was the highlight of Act One, and it was made even more amazing by how Doom Ki-Young ruthlessly turned around and left the scene.

"This is what I'm talking about. This is a high-quality production!" I remarked.

I honestly thought that it was kind of cheesy, but I was sure I fulfilled the role pretty well.

I downed a glass of wine while trying my best to erase the thought that I had the same disease[1] as Lonovera, and I felt like I was in heaven.

Of course, drinking wine while replaying the great scenes of Act One wasn't that big of a deal, but it brought me a great deal of joy. Any human would enjoy spending time

by themselves while celebrating a small win.

'Moments like this motivate me the most… '

However, I honestly would like to just rest for the rest of my life.

I took a sip of another glass of wine and placed my legs on the desk to make myself more comfortable.

However, someone knocked on the door, so I hurriedly turned off the magic hologram as if I were a teenager who didn't want to get caught watching an embarrassing video. I got so flustered that I inadvertently pressed the rewind button.

Fortunately, the magic hologram didn't give off any embarrassing moans.

However, I ended up seeing Donovan's death scene once again.

'Oh, man… '

- I-I… by a… by a mere human…

- *Ha, ha ha…*

- I'm… sorry. My friend… I'm… sorry. Belial…

'Damn it. I didn't want to see that… '

I was a bit flustered, but I made sure that my nervousness wouldn't appear on the surface.

I glanced toward the door and saw Rimoura looking at me worriedly.

- I-I'm sorry, Advisor Lee Ki-Young. I'm sorry for the sudden—

"I-It's fine," I said.

It was clear that she misunderstood.

- It wasn't your fault.

"*Huh? Ah*, right," I mumbled.

I quickly understood what she was talking about.

- No need to be so worried. It's definitely not your fault. That dumb Donovan…

"…"

- Mr. Lee Ki-Young…

"I just feel really bad. I didn't expect that an accident would occur, and I didn't expect that it would lead to Mr. Donovan's passing. It was all because I got careless. I'm sure the others are really disappointed in me right now…" I told her.

- No, please don't think that way. It wasn't something you should worry about, Advisor Lee Ki-Young. It was an unexpected situation, and it was all because of his stupidity.

"But…"

- It was his fault for ignoring the script and charging into the 17th base. He could have gone back to hell before dying, but he attempted a hail mary… Calling it a stupid move is an understatement. You don't have to feel guilty over that bastard's death.

'I know, Rimoura. I made no mistakes. I didn't do anything wrong. It's all Donovan's fault. Yeah.'

Unlike me, the demons seemed like they weren't that affected by Donovan's death. The other high priests of the 27th Legion actually called him a dumbass while seemingly ashamed to have been in the same legion as him.

Donovan got too immersed in his role, and he died for it. He died and was split by a human in half after ignoring the script and moving arbitrarily.

He could have gone back to hell by reversing the summoning, but he decided to use up his accumulated merits to transform.

However, he still ended up dying.

Therefore, I couldn't help but think that he was indeed an idiot. The way he died was far from a noble or honorable death. It was a laughable death considering his many years of experience as a demon of the 27th Legion way before it joined the 72nd legions.

The soft-liners within the legion ended up obtaining more power.

I found it sad that he thought of me as his friend until the end, but I didn't pity him at all. If I had to make a list of the dumbest deaths in the history of demons, he would be at the top of the list.

He had managed to make his name known like he wanted, but in some ways, I was the one who had contributed the most to fulfilling his wish. The method was different, but he was probably satisfied with his achievements in the afterlife.

I felt proud, but I started shedding fake tears.

"*Whooo*, he was a great demon… Mr. Donovan, I mean," I said.

- Yeah…

"He told me that he wanted to create a new hell—he told me that he wanted to create a utopia that would satisfy every demon. He said that he was willing to die for the 27th legion," I told her.

- Advisor Lee Ki-Young…

"I'm sorry, Miss Rimoura. Can I have some time alone?" I requested.

- Yes, of course.

"*Ah*, why did you come here? Is it perhaps…"

- No, it's nothing urgent. I was just personally curious about your plan moving forward. Anyway, don't worry too much about it. Really… No one has any complaints about the incident. I'm serious.

"Thank you for telling me that, and I'll let you know my plans as soon as possible," I

said.

- Okay. I'm sorry for worrying you.

"No, I should be the one who should apologize," I said.

Tentacle-oura lowered her head and kissed my cheek. Then, she placed her head on my shoulder.

She was obviously trying to comfort me.

Of course, it didn't really matter because I was relieved by the fact that I could spend some time alone once again. Not only was I enjoying my time alone, but I also needed time to organize the happenings so far.

In other words, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Rimoura's visit was perfect.

'I'm not really in the situation where I can do anything… '

I was drawing the overall plan in my mind, but the baton was now in the hands of the humans. The will to counterattack was definitely burning inside of them, so they would probably come here soon. I was sure that they already had plans on how they would wrap the entire arc beautifully, but of course, they still needed a day to freshen up.

I turned to the magic hologram while drinking the wine that Rimoura had poured for me.

I saw that the headquarters of the Continental Union was in a jubilant mood.

- Cheers! Cheers! Sing songs of victory! Let's go, my friends and comrades! Sacrifices had to be made, but their sacrifices will forever be engraved on our hearts. Cheers! Cheers! For our victory!

The dwarves were singing songs of victory…

- Raise your glass! Let's toast to victory and honor the victims! Let's be thankful for our small but huge victory.

The humans were solemnly celebrating their victory…

The atmosphere wasn't that laid back, but they were celebrating their victory to improve the overall mood of the base.

Anyway, they needed a moment like this because they were exhausted mentally and physically. I was sure the command center had no choice but to do this, and I would have made a similar decision if I were in their shoes.

It was unfortunate that I couldn't watch them up close, but even from afar, I could tell that they were excited. Of course, the ones who kept on praising Kim Hyun-Sung stood out the most.

- Thank you. Thank you… very much.!

'Yeah, you should be thankful.'

- For the new hero of mankind…! For all the future battles…!

'The atmosphere is really nice.'

- For the swordsman of light…! For the swordsman of light…!

'That's a nice nickname. Swordsman of Light…! It suits you, Hyun-Sung! Can you hear them, Hyun-Sung?'

- Sing for the hope of sunset!

'Hope of Sunset, so that's the name of that ultimate move? It was so powerful… '

- For the Sworsdman of Sunset…!

'Wow, this is nice.'

The human race had just won their very first victory against the demons after suffering a one-sided beatdown all this while. When all hope was lost, the hero of mankind appeared and made quick work of one of the Four Heavenly Kings.

It wasn't strange that they were excited.

'Yeah, I was waiting for those reactions…!'

Honestly, Kim Hyun-Sung hadn't been that impactful recently.

Of course, people were starting to recognize him slowly but surely, but it was undeniable that his presence was tiny until now.

He was so low-key that people were saying that they couldn't understand why I was working under Kim Hyun-Sung.

Some of them even made terrible comments, like how Kim Hyun-Sung was a mere puppet and I was the actual owner of the Blue Guild.

Therefore, I couldn't help but cheer when I saw that the people were finally acknowledging his abilities.

People would normally expect a hero to step up whenever the world was suffering, and Kim Hyun-Sung satisfied the prerequisites necessary to become a hero. In addition, he was the medium that would unify the continent once more, so he was important.

I didn't like the burden of being the hero of mankind, so Kim Hyun-Sung stepped up at the right time.

I had basically given half of my burden to Kim Hyun-Sung, but ironically, he looked as if he had let go of all his burdens.

Of course, he was sitting too far away, so I couldn't really see his face, but he didn't look anxious anymore. He looked carefree, which explained his current mood.

He was definitely uncomfortable with the fact that I got corrupted, and the only reason he could be in that mood was…

'I'll trust you.'

It was all because he believed that I would hold out until he arrived…

The others didn't look all that different. I couldn't really hear what Kim Hyun-Sung was saying, but I had an idea about what he was saying based on the expressions of the people around him.

Fortunately, Park Deok-Gu's loud voice was finally helpful.

- So you're saying that… our hyung-nim is still fighting?

I was sure he was telling them about the time I visited him in his consciousness.

- Hyung-nim visited you? He tapped your chest and told you that he trusts you?!

I felt like he was telling them things that they didn't have to know…

- Wait, so you two watched the sunset together?

He was telling them every single detail…

- The skill you used to defeat that demon was a gift from hyung-nim? Is that right?

He was so loud that he was practically shouting, and the entire base could probably hear him.

'That pig… '

I wasn't sure why, but the female adventurers started gathering around Kim Hyun-Sung, and for some reason, his stories boosted the morale of the female adventurers.

Their ardor to save Father Lee Ki-Young by any means necessary quickly spread throughout the entire base.

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1. chuunibyou ☜

CHAPTER 509
A SHORT BREAK (2)

- Advisor Lee Ki-Young, the fourth base has been evacuated.

“Good job,” I complimented.

- The seventh base has been evacuated as well, *hahaha*.

“You’ve all done well,” I said.

- We did nothing. It’s all thanks to you, Advisor Lee Ki-Young. We didn’t really receive recognition from the continent, so we were treated like low-ranking demons, but thanks to this incident, not only did we leave a strong impression on the humans, but we were also able to achieve great results. I got more merits through this one incident than all the merits I have accumulated my whole life. I’m really relieved that I was able to do something before returning to hell.

“*Hahaha*…” I laughed.

- And it’s all thanks to your help…

“You’re embarrassing me,” I said.

- It’s not much, but this…

“*Ah*.”

- Please accept my feelings.

“Wait, there’s no need…”

- No, this is my feelings for you. *Haha*. Please keep it.

“You don’t have to do this. I didn’t do it while expecting something in exchange…”

- Hey! Just keep it, Advisor Lee Ki-Young.

"Well, since you said it like that… *Ahem*, I have no choice but to accept. Thank you," I said.

I couldn't hold back my smile.

Yeah, I was accumulating tons of resources, but the situation itself was fun. The series of victories I was hearing from the reports were making me smile. Today, the 4th and 7th bases followed the script and successfully evacuated. Yesterday, the 13th and 19th bases evacuated safely, and I heard the news that every evacuation was successful.

I wanted to dance in joy.

'The saying was right—the saying that the biggest enemy is the dumbest ally is right… '

The hard-liners lost their motivation when Donovan died, so the project started working out smoothly. Like an eight-ton truck with a broken brake, the legion charged through the plot points of the project and succeeded, which was impressive even in my eyes.

The time we had spent together was short, but we had overcome several crises together. A few demons stood out, even in my eyes, and they showed great acting skills that terrified the humans. I was sure that their signature dialogue—the 27th Legion will return—had been engraved on the hearts of every human on the continent.

The humans were probably thinking that they had succeeded after killing Donovan, but Donovan's death was only the major casualty on the demon's side so far.

Honestly, there wouldn't have been any more casualties as long as the script was followed to the letter. Of course, they could also reverse their summoning and go back to hell upon suffering severe injuries.

As long as they managed to leave their marks on the hearts of humans, then that would be the end of their job. They would have fun gathering merits without the risk of dying as long as the script was followed.

Mankind had won, but there were still many things that were making them uneasy.

From now on, they would have to live with the knowledge that the demons that had once cornered them were still alive, and the weak-minded would probably suffer from trauma after the war.

It wasn't just the largest main force consisting of an alliance between many nations.

Many other armies were moving simultaneously across the large Federation.

Every human was watching the ongoing crisis through the magic hologram, and the rollercoaster of emotions definitely ensured that the demons would earn a ton of merits from their performance.

The demons in the situation room were all smiles; they knew that the 27th Legion's infamy was spreading like wildfire.

- It feels so good seeing those humans happy while being anxious at the same time. I really did make the right decision to follow Belial, Advisor Lee Ki-Young.

"*Hahaha*. I was worried that you wouldn't feel satisfied. I'm relieved to hear that," I said.

- The results speak for themselves. Once we've returned to hell and the merit settlement is done. I'm sure the 27th Legion will become the 20th—no, the 19th Legion by then.

"Is it really that…" I trailed off.

- Yes. It's difficult to quantify the impact you've made, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Even the other legions in hell are promoting the soft-liners, saying that they are great role models… The low and mid-ranked demons who still haven't found their own place to stay are saying that they'll work under you once you've ascended to hell two millenniums later. The top 10 leaders are also saying that they'd like to work with you.

"That's…"

- Belial cherishes you a lot, so he probably hasn't told you himself just yet.

"*Hahaha*. Please tell him that he doesn't have to worry. I'm already part of the 27th Legion. I'm grateful for the offers of the other leaders, but no matter what they offer,

I'll choose to keep working with the 27th Legion," I explained.

- I knew it…

"It's not easy to find such fun and cheerful people," I added.

- I appreciate that you think of us that way. *Ah*, how's the third base looking?

"It looks like they'll evacuate safely within the day," I replied.

- So that will be the last one…

"Don't be disappointed. I'm sure we'll meet again," I told them.

- Advisor… I'd like to stay here.

"I'd be really thankful if all of you remained here, but you have to return to hell. It's a great thing to stay here and accumulate more merits, but this place is a mere workplace for you all. You still have to deliver the good news to your wife, children, and your family, who are definitely waiting for you in hell," I told them.

-…

"You'll also become less efficient if you focus too much on work. Since you have been working hard, then you should rest for a few hundred years. You also have things to take care of in the other dimensions. I'll make sure to plan something out so that I'll summon all of you again before I ascend," I added.

- We won't forget you, Advisor Lee Ki-Young.

"Me too, *haha…"* I laughed.

- And I… have a small request…

"What is it?" I asked.

- It's embarrassing, but I'd like your autograph. Do you mind?

"I'm not sure how my autograph will help you, but since it's Miss Lilymirian's request, then I'll gladly oblige, *haha*," I answered with a smile.

- If you could sign here.

I turned to look at her hand and saw that she was holding a hardcover book in pristine condition.

'Now that I think about it… '

I had seen a few demons spending time on their own, and the ones that stood out to me the most were the demons holding the same book as Lilymirian. I didn't expect that demons enjoyed books as well, but I wasn't really surprised anymore.

Their culture wasn't really that different from humans, so it wouldn't be strange if they had best-selling books as well.

'The bestseller in hell… I'm curious.'

The title of the book caught my attention. It took me a while to read it because I was still learning the language of the demons, but I eventually managed to read the book's title.

[How the Plaguelord and the Genius Swordsman Loves.]

The title sounded familiar for some reason.

'Is that title format the trend these days?'

It seemed that the trend here was also the trend in hell. A genius swordsman was a typical, cliched archetype. It was a bit funny to see demons reading a book that depicted love, but it was highly likely that it was a different kind of love.

I was surprised to see the name of my job on the title, but it had to be a coincidence. After all, only Lonovera, Rimoura, and a few high priests knew about my job, and it was impossible to write a best-selling novel in a short period of time. Therefore, it was definitely just a coincidence.

I nodded and held up my pen.

"*Hahaha*. There's a book with a similar title here as well. Of course, I haven't really read that book, but it's interesting how that book in your hand has a similar title to a best-selling book here," I said.

- *Ah*, well…

"Have you heard of it?" I asked.

- Are you referring to AlGenLove?

"AlGenLove?"

- How the Alchemist and the Genius Swordsman Loves.

'Why is she being serious all of a sudden?'

Lilymirian frowned. She seemed displeased about something. I wasn't sure, but I also felt like I had triggered something inside her.

- It was indeed a book that the humans had written, and its quality was extremely low. It was boring because of the cliches. Cliches aren't actually bad, but they have to be used properly. The writing was bad, and the author put a lot of effort into emphasizing useless emotions. Overall, it was a really boring book. That scene wasn't as impactful as I thought, too.

'What scene?'

- I understand that the genius swordsman cherishes the alchemist, but a novel with violence and sadism can never become popular. Basically, it wasn't simulating at all. It's garbage.

'Is she a critic or something…?'

- The bait was there, but they didn't do anything about it. The bait wasn't exciting at all. It would be extremely rude to compare that book to the book I am holding right now.

"*Ah*, I'm sorry. I-I apologize," I stuttered.

- I've heard that a translator is working hard to translate this novel into the common

language of the humans here. I'm sure this book will be great learning material for the dumb humans here. They'll definitely realize how garbage AlGenLove is. I would really love to get summoned back here—Ah, I digress. I apologize for getting worked up. I'm sorry, Advisor Lee Ki-Young.

"No, it's fine. It's good that you have something you're so passionate about. Where should I…"

- *Ah*, please sign right under the title. If you could write—to my lovely Lilymarian…

"Sure."

- This will be my gift to my daughter… Thank you very much, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

"No problem, *hahaha*. It was nothing. Thank you for your hard work, Miss Lilymirian," I said.

- I'll never forget this favor, Advisor Lee Ki-Young. I'll be going now.

"I'm looking forward to our next meeting," I said.

- Me, too. I'll be sure to continue watching over you from hell. I hope things will work out successfully for you here.

Lilymirian smiled brightly as her figure turned into innumerable light crystals. Things got a bit hectic because of her sudden book review, but I appreciated her last words before going back to hell.

'I have to finish this and succeed. Yeah, I have to… '

The process was great and successful, but it would be meaningless if the ending was a disaster. I couldn't give a proper review because I was one of the characters of this arc rather than a reader, but I knew for sure that the winners would have a good ending.

I was under a lot of pressure as well. I had earned the trust of many demons, but if I were to fail in wrapping this up, then many of them would…

'Lose their trust in me… '

My shoulders suddenly felt heavy when I realized that I had to create an ending that would satisfy both the continent and the demons in hell. Honestly, I had already given up on the idea of fighting Kim Hyun-Sung, but I couldn't think of a better ending.

I thought hard and long about it, but Doom Ki-Young and Light Hyun-Sung's showdown to wrap things up would be the greatest ending that would further bolster the value and quality of the entire project.

'Shit, I need to find a way… '

I could borrow Belial's powers, but it wouldn't be that useful because my current job—Plaguelord—wasn't that powerful. I thought about having a demon as a vanguard to protect me while I cast spells from behind, but it wouldn't be as impactful and as cool as fighting Kim Hyun-Sung one versus one.

I thought of summoning a beast, but I didn't like the idea either.

While I was frantically looking for a way to create a cooler ending, I suddenly remembered my summoned beasts. I quickly composed myself, and even though I wasn't sure if I could reach them, I still decided to open up the communication channel.

'Hello?'

[*Huh? Uh?* Have you come back to your senses? Where… are you right—how are you feeling?]

'I think it's best if we meet and talk before anything else, Miss Dialugia.'

I needed the black dragon—no, the Black Plague Dragon, Dialugia.

CHAPTER 510
IN LINDEL (1)

“You…! Just… just how big of a scum can you be?!” Dialugia yelled.

We greeted each other happily, but our joy lasted only for a moment. Dialugia roared at me when she finally discovered what was going on. I got a bit scared when I saw her solemn expression, but I knew that I had to be confident and firm. After all, the balance of the continent was on my shoulders.

“You already know what’s going on, so you should know my answer. All these started because of me, but it’s undeniable that I’m doing all this for the continent,” I said.

“But you’ve gone too far by releasing demons onto the continent. In addition to that, you even stood on their side and helped them. Are you out of your mind?!” she questioned.

“You don’t have to be angry, Miss Dialugia. What could I have done? I didn’t summon the demons, and they had never asked me to stay here. Are you actually saying that to me while knowing where the demons had come from in the first place?” I asked.

“Don’t try to rationalize your actions. It disgusts me,” she replied.

“No, I’m not trying to rationalize anything here. If Benigoa, Elune, and the other gods of the continent were in their right minds, do you really think that I would be here doing all this? Those demons emerged because of those incompetent gods, so why are you mad at me? You should be mad at them, not at me,” I asked.

“…”

“Have you already forgotten that I am ultimately helping Benigoa here? I’m sure the prayers of her devotees have earned her enough holy power to pay off at least a third of her debt. In addition, who do you think is responsible for reining those demons in? Seriously, why are you trying to antagonize me here?”

“…”

“The continent would perish if things were to go out of control, and Belial is the one holding back the hard-liners from truly invading the continent by finding a loophole in the god’s management. It’s also because of Belial that the hard-liners of hell lost their influence,” I said.

“That’s…”

“How dare you condemn me for being a huge scum when I had been suppressing the hard-liners by supporting the soft-liners? I have also been providing holy power to the incompetent gods of this continent, and I gave the people of the continent a path to becoming even stronger through hardships and Rift Land…”

“You should be completely aware… you should be completely aware of the fact that everything I have been doing is ultimately for the continent, Miss Dialugia,” I added.”

“S-Still, what you’ve done this time is unforgivable. This isn’t… this isn’t right,” she stuttered.

“So what should I have done? Do you really believe that I should have resisted those demons with mankind? Do you really believe that I shouldn’t have worked with them? In that case, then let’s go. Let’s go and fight them right now,” I said.

“No, that’s not what I meant… she said.

“*Geez*… I’m the one who has been working hard to maintain the balance of the continent. You could say that I’m doing the work that you and the other dragons are supposed to be doing. I’m not sure what you’ve been doing since this incident broke out. To be honest, I think this is the most reasonable way. If you have a better idea, then feel free to let me know. If I like it, I’ll carry it out right away,” I complained.

“I’m not saying this because I have an idea. I’m just telling you my opinion based on the bigger picture that I’m seeing… I-I’ll definitely thank you for all the things you’ve done, but no matter how much I think about it, I just can’t understand…” she muttered.

“Do you really think that it’s possible to remain righteous while trying to maintain the balance of the world? Such an endeavor will inevitably violate ethics and morality, but tell me, do you really think that being righteous is more important than the continent’s balance?”

“The process isn’t all that ethical, sure, but it is the most reasonable way to achieve results. Is it not? The continent will be peaceful once more, but the people of the continent will never forget the terror of the demons, so they will work hard to prepare for another invasion from the demons…”

“In other words, it will be a righteous and balanced world. Think about it, our Smartie will be living in that world. *Ahem*, basically, if we nitpick the details, then the atmosphere of the set will be ruined.”

“…”

“Just think of it as fighting yourself, okay?” I said.

“But, still… a plague dragon is a bit… a bit…” Dialugia stuttered.

“Are you saying that your personal image is more important than the continent? Have you always been that kind of dragon?” I questioned.

“No. That’s… not it,” she answered.

“All right, then get ready. Our Smartie is currently hibernating, so we don’t have to worry about her,” I told her.

“But it’s all going to be recorded…” she pointed out.

“*Ah*…” I frowned.

“F-Fine. I-I’ll do my best,” she said.

“Remember to look sad—I want you to look *really* sad,” I emphasized.

“O-okay…” Dialugia said blankly. She looked like she had lost everything important to her. I wasn’t really sure if I could use her, but she agreed a lot faster than I thought.

She definitely couldn’t think of anything to say against me.

Dialugia had to have finally realized that even though it wasn’t the most righteous method out there, it was the most reasonable and most efficient method to ensure that the continent would return to its original state before the advent of Benigoa.

'It's going to be fine… '

I was controlling the demons and making the continent even stronger while providing holy power to Benigoa. In other words, it was a perfectly balanced situation, and it had to be maintained at all costs.

We could have turned the tables against the demons, but it was already too late. I was sure that Dialugia was aware of that as well, but right now, she couldn't do anything about it.

Dialugia trembled in agony. She was stuttering, but her overall acting was decent. Her acting skills were good enough to be aired for the entire continent to see.

- I-I'm… going to resist. I-It won't go the way you want… no matter what…!

- Interesting. I can't believe you can still speak that way even though you have already fallen. You're supposed to protect the balance of the continent, but now, you'll be an enemy of the continent, you dumb dragon.

- You must wake up. You're the human that I… c-chose. Don't fall for his temptation. Your friends, the people you cherish, and the people who cherish you are still waiting for you. Dialuria is waiting for you. Don't give in to them. I know better than anyone that you're still fighting inside. Please…!

- You're still talking nonsense. The human you chose has perished. He's not here anymore. You chose him arbitrarily, so this time, It'll be my turn. Dialugia, you'll be reborn as a member of my party.

- I believe in you…

-…

- I believe that… a handful of purity still remains in your soul.

- Interesting…

- I can see it in your eyes. I can tell when I look into those… pure eyes… of yours. They are still the same eyes I saw when I first met you. You're still fighting… I'm sure of it.

- Stop it. I don't want to hear any more nonsense from you.

I raised my hand, and darkness devoured Dialugia. Of course, the visual effects were staged, but it was pretty effective and convincing. Her shiny black scales turned dull, and her eyes glazed over.

Dialugia's signature pair of horns turned into two iron lumps that contained an extremely disgusting energy that made the horns look like they were rotting, and a dark green liquid started flowing out of her mouth.

A glance was enough for anyone to deduce that she had become a plague dragon.

Overall, she looked visually shocking and striking.

I was so happy to see her new look that I wanted to clap my hands.

- *Roooooooooar!!!*

"Cut! *Wow*, Miss Dialugia. It looks like you have an unexpected talent. *Hahaha*. I didn't expect that you'll be so good at it," I complimented her.

- Was that… good enough?

"Yes. If you'd like to do more, we can film more. I'm honestly really satisfied, but who knows? Perhaps the next scene will be even better," I replied.

- No. I-If you're satisfied, then I think… it's best if we end here.

When she returned to her human form, Dialugia looked like she had lost everything precious to her once again. She looked like she wasn't exactly dissatisfied with what was going on. Rather, she looked ashamed of herself.

Of course, I understood why she thought that way. After all, Dialugia had never been the type of person to do something like this. In addition, she was also worried that other dragons might see her form as a plague dragon.

I couldn't help but feel nervous while looking at her because she truly looked heartbroken.

'I can't use you with that look on your face… '

She did look like a plague dragon, but the look of sadness on her face wouldn't fit the upcoming battle between her and Kim Hyun-Sung. After all, the vanguard had to be determined and strong so that the rearguard would be able to focus on supporting her.

"Anyway, tell them to disperse Belial's energy in Everia. If it gets any closer to the World Tree, then I'm afraid that the World Tree will be in danger once again. As you mentioned, I'm supposed to maintain the balance of the continent, so I can't just stand by and watch anymore," said Dialugia.

"*Ah…* Well, that's…" I mumbled.

"Is there some great reason behind it?" she asked.

"No, it's nothing like that. Don't you think it'll be more natural for us to thrash around? Mankind is moving forward with a beacon of hope by their side, but they still recently lost eighteen of their bases. In other words, they're currently trying to recover. In that case, we have to focus on them so that there won't be any doubts," I answered.

"Are you saying that…" Dialugia trailed off.

"Yes, the demons are targeting Everia, which will weaken the quality of the Federation's troops. We have to add that part to the script. That way, the humans will end up losing their bases just to force the demons away. In other words, the demons will be able to retreat without losing face," I explained.

"Is that really the only reason?" she questioned.

"Yes, the stakes have to remain high. Who would be afraid of the demons if they keep on losing? Don't you think we should leave a huge scar on the continent before we wrap things up?" I asked.

"Wait, are you really going to harm the World Tree?" she asked in shock.

"I'm a scum, yes, but that's too—what kind of demonic thoughts are you having? You sure know how to come up with horrifying ideas, seriously," I said.

"…" Dialugia didn't know what to say.

“I’m talking about Lindel. Lindel has to suffer,” I explained.

“Lindel…” she repeated.

“Yes. I’m sure Lee Ji-Hye is expecting it. Of course, she’s not sure because she lacks information. However, take a look at the bases where the 27th Legion’s demons are present…” I paused.

“I’m not sure what’s going on,” she said.

“Take a closer look, and pay more attention to the bases that are under the Continental Union’s supervision. Under the assumption that the 27th Legion takes the 19th, 21st, and the 32nd bases again…”

“A path to Lindel will open…” she muttered.

“The humans will definitely find it hard to maintain all those bases right now because they are thinking that the 27th Legion is heading toward Everia. In other words, they have no choice but to withdraw their troops from the aforementioned bases, so…”

“You’re thinking about capturing those bases and then invading Lindel right afterward,” said Dialugia.

“That’s right. That’s the plot of the final chapter,” I told her.

“In other words…” Dialugia trailed off.

“Yes. Aside from a small number of troops to serve as a distraction, the 27th Legion will be heading toward Lindel,” I informed her.

CHAPTER 511
IN LINDEL (2)

“It’s… Lindel. No matter how much I think about it, it’s definitely Lindel,” I[1] said.

“But, Miss Lee Ji-Hye… If we pull the troops, it’ll become too dangerous…”

“We have no other choice. I don’t want to get rid of what we’ve obtained so far, but since the demons are acting that way, we have no other choice but to do so. He’s being so aggressive, so I really think that he’s unconscious. However, I can still see the hallmarks of the Blue Guild’s Sub Guild Master based on the demons ‘actions so far,” I explained.

“…”

“We’re pulling back the troops. I’m sorry, but I won’t accept any other suggestions. Please inform the leader of the bases. Additionally, send an evacuation order to Lindel and to all the small cities right now. Make sure that the cities will be completely empty by today. For Lindel, the city has to be empty in five hours,” I ordered.

“But shouldn’t we hear the opinion of the others first? The field commanders at the defensive lines will probably disagree. I think Everia—”

“I’m worried that what we’ve created will be ruined by that order…”

“I understand, but we’re in an emergency. We have no time to waste in worthless discussions. The troops at Everia will definitely get anxious about losing the bases, but they won’t need those bases. I’m sure that the demons are targeting Lindel, so they’ll definitely understand that we had no other choice when the time comes,” I explained.

“What do you mean…”

“Think about how the demons are able to obtain the mana they need to remain here,” I replied.

"*Ah!*"

"Exactly. They need more humans to stay here. Belial's energy near Everia is probably a distraction to hide their plans of attacking Lindel. I'm positive that the demons' goal is to stay here for an extended period of time. Once they capture Lindel—which is located in the middle of the continent—it would only be a matter of time until they take over the entire continent. After all, Lindel is also the center of the Sacred Democratic Country's economy," I continued.

"So…"

"The upcoming battle will probably be the final battle. It will determine the future of the continent. Anyway, let's meet again in exactly one hour. In the next hour, I want you to deliver the news to the command team and strategic team at every base. When we meet up again, we'll start discussing the upcoming battle," I instructed.

"Yes, ma'am."

"It'll be a long meeting. Thank you, everyone," I said.

"It should be us who should thank you…"

"*Whoo…*"

There was a clicking noise as the doors closed when the members of the strategic team finally receded like a tide. I looked out the window, and the gloominess was palpable. It had been a few days since I started having all sorts of thoughts.

However, I actually felt a bit relieved when I realized what was going on—no, a strange passion started burning inside me. I cried a lot when the incident broke out, but it was all because I was confused.

Anyone else in my shoes would have done the same.

'That scummy bastard…!'

I had my doubts. I couldn't understand how the scum got kidnapped by the demons while helping the refugees of the Federation. He was selfish and tougher than a cockroach, so I was bothered by the fact that he had chosen to put himself in danger.

I was sure that I was missing something here, but humans would blank out when faced with a crisis.

A part of me started to feel anxious, and I desperately tried to sleep to get rid of that anxiety. I started thinking that something was strange when the Guild Master of the Blue Guild awakened.

To be exact, it was when Kim Hyun-Sung started talking about his dream.

'I wonder if there's anyone who's scummier than him.'

I had no idea why. I was still confused about why Lee Ki-Young decided to work with the demons, but I was sure that Doom Ki-Young's goal wasn't the extinction of mankind. He would earn a ton of profit once the ongoing crisis was done.

Actually, he had already profited a lot from the rapid growth of mankind, which had always been a hot topic before the crisis broke out, to Kim Hyun-Sung's awakening.

Of course, I was sure that he also wanted the continent to return to its original state before the advent of Benigoa.

I was sure that the majority of the people on the continent had no idea about it, but if one were to examine everything one by one, he hadn't really lost anything over this incident.

'He probably profited… '

However, what pissed me off the most was that he decided to keep everything a secret from me. I was so surprised that my jaw dropped when I heard about Kim Hyun-Sung's dream, and I was sure that Cha Hee-Ra, Elena, and Kasugano Yuno felt the same.

Rather than one of the women, he decided to meet Kim Hyun-Sung. I was beyond confused and furious. However, I decided to comfort myself by telling myself that it was better than him appearing in another bitch's dream.

Unfortunately, Kim Hyun-Sung's reaction made me realize that something was off about the situation itself.

"I'm sure… he's fighting even now. He said he believed… that he'll hold out. He definitely

told me that."

"Shit."

"Ah… you're talking about that technique. I don't recall exactly how I unlocked it, but I believe it's a gift from Mr. Ki-Young. No, I'm certain it's a gift from him. He probably thinks that I'm not strong enough right now."

"Lee Ki-Young, you bastard…!"

'I… honestly don't know how he visited me. I think he found out that I was falling apart. If he hadn't visited me… I would have still been wandering in the space that my consciousness had created for me. I'm sure… I'm sure that he discovered that one's consciousness is capable of creating a safe haven for itself—I'm sure he discovered that while fighting… himself.'

"In other words, he hasn't noticed the fact that I'm sad. Lee Ki-Young, you bastard…!"

Of course, it was a great thing that he had visited Kim Hyun-Sung. The headquarters asked Kim Hyun-Sung about their encounter, and Kim Hyun-sung gave a really plain answer, so there was no reason for me to be angry.

However, humans tend to focus on useless emotions, so I felt like Kim Hyun-Sung was subtly mocking me with his smile. He also sounded like he was teasing me while he was talking about his rendezvous with that scum, so I naturally got angry.

To be exact, I was holding a grudge against that scum. When I heard my friend talking about how her boyfriend valued his friend more than her, I only smirked at her derisively, but now that I was in the same situation, I had no idea what to do.

'Is he going to visit me in my dreams?'

I was sure everyone else thought the same thing. I knew it was disgraceful to be jealous, but I couldn't help but be jealous and angry.

I nodded when I thought about his corrupted look.

'His preferences are unique, to say the least… '

"And he's really sexy…"

He sported silver eyes and hair with his corrupted look. I didn't really like his mask, but even his mask looked sexy in my eyes. I couldn't help but hope that he would maintain the look even after the crisis was over.

His pale skin—which showed that he barely suffered after being summoned here—had become even paler. His performance as a villain was also for the highlight reel because he was trying his best not to lose his original identity. I even personally saved the video of him looking down at mankind with his disgusting smile.

As for the recent video where he corrupted Dialugia. I felt a tingling in my loins for some reason, and goosebumps also broke out all over me when I saw him looking down at the dumb dragon as if she were some kind of insect.

I knew that the silver hair and the corrupted look were cheesy old cliches. On the stage, it depicted a scene of a tragedy, but in retrospect, the audience would probably find it too edgy.

However, my heart pounded madly against my chest when I recalled his new appearance.

'He's my perfect man… '

I had always liked his personality, but I really liked his appearance this time. He was a bit annoying at times, but his appearance was enough for me to forgive him.

'I'll fall for it this time as well… I mean, what else can I do?'

I kept on tapping the table with my fingers while imagining things, but my train of thought was interrupted by a knocking on the door. It hadn't been that long since the meeting concluded, but I told them to come in anyway.

When the door opened, I saw an anxious messenger standing by the door.

"Miss Lee Ji-Hye."

"Yes?"

'I think I have an idea as to what this is about… '

"There's news that… the demons stationed at the main bases of the 27th Legion are

decreasing. The commanders of our bases can start attacking those bases right away…" the messenger said.

'I knew it.'

"I'm sure I had told them that they are not allowed to attack… Remind them of my words. Remind them that we're giving up on conquering bases. Have they detected any movements from the enemy's main force?" I asked.

"They're not sure about the destination, but the demons are apparently leaving Amera," they replied.

'As expected… '

There was nothing more gratifying than one's assumption ending up being correct. It would be a lie for me to say that I wasn't anxious about my assumption, but as expected, my man ended up choosing Lindel as the final stage.

It wasn't really strange because Lindel was in the middle of the continent, and it was the Sacred Democratic Country's main economic hub. It was also the city where most adventurers would take their first step into the real world.

Aside from accomplishing his goals, I was sure that he had more reasons why he chose Lindel as the final stage.

Anyway, Lindel wasn't a bad final stage—especially for someone like him who was always obsessed with production quality. He was familiar with Lindel, so it was the most suitable place to wrap things up beautifully.

The final chapter would be between Doom Ki-Young and the members of the Blue Guild, who desperately wanted him to come to his senses.

It would be between the Swordsman of Light, and Doom Ki-Young, who had transcended his limits using the power of the demons.

When I recalled how he decided to recruit Dialugia, it was safe to say that he would try and fight Kim Hyun-Sung one-on-one.

"*Geez*…"

“Excuse me?”

“It’s nothing. Nothing at all,” I answered.

I was prepared to show him what true staging looked like, and I would create a stage so great that he would forget about my past mistakes of creating mediocre stages.

I wanted to show him what a perfect stage looked like. I didn’t know what was going on, but the fact that he didn’t include me in his plans made me think that he was looking down on me.

‘I’ll make sure you’ll realize my true capabilities… ’

Competent women would always look charming. It would look a bit forced, but the setting where Doom Ki-Young and Kim Hyun-Sung would meet was extremely important, so I had to do something that would make the situation even more dramatic.

I started thinking about Doom Ki-Young and the Swordsman of Light’s stage while also thinking about the troops’ formation. I really didn’t want to help him because he had basically looked down on me, but the ending had to transcend perfection.

A day later, I heard the news that the demon army targeting Everia was retreating.

I also heard the news that the entire 27th Legion was heading toward Lindel.

‘I should definitely record this… ’

I had no idea if *that* version of Lee Ki-Young would remain once the ongoing crisis was over, so I decided to capture as many videos and images of Doom Ki-Young as possible.

With that being said, the fog of war started to gather in Lindel.

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1. Lee Ji-Hye’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 512
IN LINDEL (3)

"So you ended up staying, Father Basel…" I[1] muttered.

"You decided to stay as well, Miss Oscar," Father Basel said.

"The Continental Union is afraid, but they're staying. In addition, no leader in the world should run away for the sake of their own survival. I'll go down with the Democratic Country; I'll die with my people. That is my final role as an incompetent leader," I said.

Father Basel nodded in response. His temper had always been compared to fire, even in the Vatican, so the fact that I couldn't see any traces of his temper meant that he was truly worried.

He looked like he had aged a few years in advance, and his haggard look seemed to represent his feelings.

I was sure that it simply wasn't because of the demons. Father Basel had never gotten any proper sleep since the incident started. When the news about Father Lee Ki-Young's abduction made rounds, Father Basel locked himself up in the prayer room.

The goddess statue shed tears of blood once more, which led Father Basel to become even more ravenous in his prayers. He was so desperate that he had no idea that he was breaking down.

"We have the same thoughts. I've gotten old and weak to the extent that I can't even cast a holy spell properly. The fact that we can't stand on the front line together is a curse, so how can I escape the Sacred Democratic Country just to survive? I'm sure… I'm sure we'll win," he said.

"So you haven't given up." I pointed out.

"*Haha*, actually, a few days ago…" he paused.

“Yes?”

“I received a call from the Guild Master of the Blue Guild,” he continued.

“The Guild Master of the Blue Guild…” I repeated.

“Yes, the Swordsman of Light. He told me to trust him and to pray for him,” he added.

“*Ah…*”

“He told me that Father Lee Ki-Young is still fighting the demon inside of him. Apparently, Father Lee Ki-Young had visited him and told him not to give up. He also told me that Father Lee Ki-Young wanted me to pray for him so that he’ll have enough strength to resist the demon inside of him,” he said.

“I see,” I commented.

“I’m ashamed, Miss Oscar,” he said.

“Sorry?”

“I’m very ashamed,” he repeated.

“Father Basel…” I called out.

“I’m ashamed because it felt like I was caught red-handed. I felt like the young hero had caught me red-handed on the verge of giving up, and I felt like he noticed my growing resentment toward Benigoa,” he explained.

“I’m certain Father Lee Ki-Young will overcome this,” I told him.

“Of course. I know he will. Father Lee Ki-Young will definitely overcome this. Goddess Benigoa will never abandon her servant. Of course, but…” Father Basel trailed off.

“We must overcome the issue before us,” I said.

“Yes, I believe in the goddess, the warriors who are fighting for the future, the continent, and in Father Lee Ki-Young, who is definitely suffering a lot as we speak,” he confessed.

“Me, too…” I mumbled.

“…”

“I feel the same way,” I emphasized.

I had to suppress my bitter smile and look forward quietly. The people of Lindel could run away, but I didn’t see anyone running away. Everyone knew that Lindel was about to be enveloped by darkness, but I still saw people gathering in the square to pray.

“This battle will determine the fate of the continent,” Father Basel said.

The troops were the ones who would fight on the battlefield, but they weren’t the only ones who were fighting. I was sure that the denizens, who were waiting for the start of the decisive battle here, knew what was going on. I was sure of it. Otherwise, they wouldn’t be here.

A woman was looking up at the sky while holding her child. There were young priests praying, and soldiers were staring intently at the approaching darkness on the horizon.

I saw a couple holding hands and a young man helping out an old couple. Everyone was doing their part. I was sure that they believed that the continent would overcome this crisis and that this wouldn’t be any different from the past incidents.

And that was why I had to be steadfast…

Unfortunately, I couldn’t stop my tears from falling down my cheeks.

‘You have to be safe, Father Lee Ki-Young.’

I clasped my hands and prayed desperately.

‘Please… please, Goddess Benigoa.’

I prayed for the sake of many things—for the sake of the continent, for his peace, and for him to have enough strength to overcome his trial—I prayed for him so that I would one day hear him calling me Lady Aris once more. I prayed for the holy army in Lindel; I prayed that they would overcome the upcoming trial.

* * *

- Don't be nervous, my friends. The Goddess Benigoa and the Swordsman of Sunset are with us. We will never fall. We will never give up on the light we have lost until the continent is peaceful once more.

"*Whoo… whoo…*

Boom. Boom.

"*Whoo…"*

Boom. Boom.

"Are you all right?"

"Yes, I-I'm fine."

"You must be a volunteer."

"Yes, that's right."

"You seem kind of old… Actually, more importantly… You should have retired a long time ago."

"Yes, it's been a while since I retired. The more I climbed up the ranks, the more I realized that I couldn't handle the responsibilities…"

"Why are you here? I don't remember forcing people to stay here, and you're not in the condition to fight. Those shoulders… aren't you injured?"

"I'm from Laios."

"I see…"

I was kind of relieved to see the soldier nodding slowly because I had an idea why the soldier was here, despite his injuries. I was sure everyone had their own reasons for staying here, but I was sure that this man had a different reason for coming here.

He was from Laios, and the man started talking. I didn't really ask him any questions,

but I had no choice but to listen. He looked nervous, but everyone here was probably nervous because of the incoming army of demons.

The hearts of the troops of the Continental Union in Lindel pounded madly against their chests with every footstep the demons made, and the darkness they brought with them instilled fear in us. I was trying to distract myself by listening to the anxious soldier.

My legs were trembling, so I couldn't move properly.

However, I was sure that the story he was about to tell me would give me strength.

The soldier told me his story, and I instantly knew what kind of story it was.

"Father Lee Ki-Young saved my wife and daughter."

"…"

"I'm sure he doesn't remember. Actually, he probably has no idea that someone like me exists. I'm sure that I'm just one of the many people who owe him their lives, but I'll never forget what Father Lee Ki-Young looked like that day. He emitted so much holy power that his body started melting from the burden. He protected us from the spell that the demon legion had cast. It was a sight that I'll never forget."

"That's a good reason to wield your weapon once again, but are you not… scared?"

I sounded like I was asking myself as well.

"Of course I'm scared. Why won't I be scared? But… I don't regret my decision to come here."

"You're brave."

"It's more like a sense of guilt than bravery. If Father Lee Ki-Young hadn't gone overboard that day to protect Laios, I'm sure all this wouldn't have happened in the first place."

"There's no need to feel guilty about the past. That's why you're here, anyway."

"But…"

“It’s not just you. I’m sure everyone thinks the same. I’m sure many people are indebted to him. He must have helped them indirectly or saved them from a huge incident.”

“I see…”

“The three guilds of Lindel, the denizens of Lindel, the adventurers of the continent, and the priests following Goddess Benigoa. They’ve gathered here to save him, and he’s still fighting as we speak. Apparently, he appeared in the Swordsman of Sunset’s dream and gifted him the power to save the continent, and I also… heard his voice.”

“Yes, I heard it as well…”

“I’m sure he’s desperately waiting for us, and I’m sure he believes us from the bottom of his heart, so we cannot afford to lose. Trust the people here and your comrades who will fight with you on this battlefield.”

I patted his shoulder to comfort him, and he nodded, looking as if he gained a bit of courage.

I felt a bit relieved because I didn’t say all that just to comfort that soldier.

“I’m sure your feelings will reach Father Lee Ki-Young.”

“I’m sure it will.”

“*Ah…*”

“They’ll reach him, so don’t worry,” a voice chimed in.

I turned around and saw a familiar face. The speaker was a large-framed man carrying a shield that seemed to be even heavier and larger than his frame.

The large-framed man walked slowly while carrying the massive shield as if it weighed nothing. He eventually reached me and smiled before patting my shoulder with his large hand

“T-Thank you very much about b-back then.” the volunteer next to me stuttered.

“I didn’t do it. Our hyung-nim did. I was just lucky that I was there. Anyway, thanks

for coming. I'm sure hyung-nim will be happy, and I'm sure that your voice will reach him."

The large-framed man stared at the horizon, and we eventually heard the deep sound of a horn.

Otherworldly monsters from beyond the walls ran toward us while roaring.

The earth started trembling, and I frowned at the monsters' roars.

However, I had to bite my lips and be courageous because this battle was extremely important for mankind.

The volunteer next to me released a frightened shout and took a stance with his spear, but I was sure that everyone felt the same as him. Protecting Lindel meant protecting the light of the continent, but the question was…

'Can we win?'

Could mankind truly beat those strange monsters?

The holy guardian dragon of the Sacred Democratic Country was circling us from above while covered in the greenish energy of plague. Meanwhile, the symbol of Benigoa was looking down at his hometown with hostility while wearing a corrupted half-mask.

He was the light of the continent, and we had lost him. Considering that, could we really overcome this crisis? My head became filled with useless thoughts as the enemies got closer.

My strong faith and belief were replaced by fear and anxiety. My legs trembled vigorously, and I broke out into a cold sweat at the horrifying sight. My ears started ringing as well, and the ringing got so loud that I screamed furiously.

Booooooooooooom!!! Booooooooooooom!!! Booooooooooooom!!!

The ringing in my ears was vanquished by explosions. We didn't get bombarded by magic, but before I could compose myself, I heard someone's roar.

"Prepare for battle! Prepare for battle!"

My expression turned awkward as I tried my best to compose myself, but I decided to abandon that idea as I shouted at the top of my lungs, “Prepare for battle! Prepare for battle…!”

I shouted so loudly that people started looking at me. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that I was forcefully trying to improve the morale of the troops. I also looked more desperate than relaxed when I started shouting, but I gripped my weapon even tighter.

The large-framed man’s shout made me feel better for some reason.

[You have been affected by the Legendary attribute, Morale Shout. Your stats have been greatly increased temporarily.]

“*Hahaha*…”

I couldn’t understand the emotions welling up inside of me, so I looked at the large-framed man next to me in disbelief.

“I’m sure we’ll win…” he muttered.

And just like that, the battle that would decide the fate of the continent began…

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1. Oscar’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 513
IN LINDEL (4)

'Did we get here too quickly?'

"It doesn't matter which side," I said.

I knew Lee Ji-Hye would make her move soon, but it didn't really matter because approaching them while they were still preparing to fight wasn't such a bad idea. I knew that I would have to adjust the details, anyway.

The humans simply had to defend and look for an opportunity to strike, but the demon army had to consider many things.

My one-on-one battle with Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't happen that easily, so I had to make sure that the journey there would be smooth. Obviously, I had to make sure that the humans wouldn't suffer too much damage.

The plot was basically this—I was going to make Kim Hyun-Sung run around so that he would be exhausted, and we would encounter each other in a touching way at the place where we were supposed to meet.

It sounded great on paper, but it was easier said than done.

There were many uncertain elements, so I had to be extra cautious. To be honest, I was worried because there were so many variables. I even started doubting if my plan would even work, but as we got closer to Lindel, I saw a scene that made me nod.

I used Mind's Eye to take a closer look at the human army, their condition, the location where the reinforcements were hiding, and their particularly tight formation. It seemed one couldn't really extract a lot of information from such things.

However, I saw many things with just a look.

'As expected from Ji-Hye noona… '

It was a stage for me.

'So she knew all along… It seriously feels a bit eerie… '

It wasn't strange that she was quick-witted. After all, she was a villain along with the masked scum in her past life.

Her nature was similar to mine as well, and since we had worked on many projects before this incident, it wouldn't be strange if she still hadn't noticed it.

However, the perfect stage was so perfect that it caught me off guard.

I knew what she wanted, and she knew what I wanted—this was basically it.

She gathered those who would have to die in one place while ensuring that her allies wouldn't take that much damage.

The sector where I had to send more troops had better defenses, while the sector I had to break through would definitely open like an automatic door to me.

Moreover, she had also set traps for the demons that I had to kill here, so I felt like she really knew what I wanted and set things up according to my desires.

'I wasn't sure what you'll like, so I prepared everything I could prepare.'

It felt like she was handing me a pair of chopsticks after preparing a scrumptious buffet for me. It was the same case for Kim Hyun-Sung. I was sure that he would move separately as a support unit, and I could see that Lee Ji-Hye herself would take control of the tactical nuke named Kim Hyun-Sung.

Of course, she wasn't as efficient as me because she didn't have Mind's Eye. The orders she could give Kim Hyun-Sung would definitely be limited, but I wanted to shout in delight when I realized that she could still lead Kim Hyun-Sung to my location.

It was then that I realized that I didn't have to think about complicated things.

'This is how you plan things out… '

I was surprised by the quality of the production, and I was looking forward to the stage she had made for me. My headache went away, and I felt refreshed. Lonovera—my new attending secretary—noticed my smile and said.

- Advisor Lee Ki-Young.

“Yes, Miss Lonovera?”

- What will you do? Won’t it be great if you say something here while maintaining the line? If it’s a propaganda war…

“No, it’s not necessary. I would have offered several negotiation cards, but being a wicked being who does not have the capacity to hold a proper conversation should be more effective here,” I replied.

- As expected… you want to see them as soon as possible.

‘Of course, I do. I put a lot of work into this… ’

“Yes, I’ve been eagerly waiting for this moment. We spent a lot of time preparing, so I feel pressured about wrapping this up. I can’t disappoint demons like you. I need to bring results so that the demons can return to hell with relief,” I explained.

- We’re already satisfied, Advisor Lee Ki-Young. Whenever I think about all the things you’ve done…

“*Hahaha*. Even if that’s true, won’t it be better if the ending is phenomenal as well? Please deliver this message to the demons. Make sure they’re aware of when to retreat and return to hell so that they won’t experience the same thing Mr. Donovan did, and please tell them to complete the missions I’ve given to them separately,” I ordered.

- I understand, Advisor Lee Ki-Young.

‘Wow, this is making me nervous… ’

I had many reasons to smile, but I felt nervous for some reason. Was this what the people of a game company would feel whenever they were about to release a new big game? My heart pounded madly against my chest, and I felt short of breath at the thought of filming something with Kim Hyun-Sung.

The reason was slightly different, but the demons here probably felt the same. The actors of the 27th Legion were nervous. They had accumulated enough results, but they also wanted to end this arc properly.

They looked like actors who were waiting for their turn in an important shoot.

'At least they look a little better than them… '

The humans knew that they were about to fight the demons of the 27th Legio, and they were beyond scared.

I even saw someone incessantly trembling with an extremely pallid look.

Of course, there were people courageous enough to stand tall while wielding their swords, but I believe that they were scared as well.

I started wondering whether a war was actually going to break out, but a loud voice interrupted my train of thought.

"Prepare for battle! Prepare for battle…!"

Park Deok-Gu pounded his shield with his fist with an awkward expression, but he was shouting at the top of his lungs.

"Prepare for battle! Prepare for battleee…!"

[You have been affected by the Legendary attribute, Morale Shout. Your stats have been greatly increased temporarily.]

Wow, Park Deok-Gu… ' He was my younger brother, so I was happy to see his growth. I started smiling while staring at him. *'You really grew a lot. Hey pig, your hyung is proud of you. I'm really proud.'*

Park Deok-Gu raised the morale of the terrified troops of the Continental Union, and he gave them a buff as well. It was clear that Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't the only one who grew during all this.

The lump of meat had also grown to the extent that he could finally lead his own group of adventurers.

Of course, the others had grown as well. I swept my gaze across the people beneath me using Mind's Eye, and I saw that the entire human race seemed to have gotten stronger overall.

In addition to the Blue Guild, the nameless small to mid-sized clans and the soldiers of the Sacred Democratic Country had grown a lot. I could only imagine the experiences that they had to go through to improve this fast.

Their minds had matured as well. Jung Ha-Yan had become more obedient, while Elena looked like she had become stoic. Cha Hee-Ra also seemed like she had learned how to think rationally, while Kasugano Yuno seemed like she had grown a bit more independent than before.

I was sure that they were still lacking if I were to compare them to their past lives, but mankind was currently strong enough to stop a division of the 27th Legion.

I raised my hand and revealed a wicked smile. The troops of the Continental Union went quiet as the demon army marched closer and closer to Lindel. The high priests of the army used their own methods to boost the demon's morale.

At last, the demon army got close enough to Lindel.

"Kill those pesky humans," I ordered, and the demons roared at once.

The cacophony of roars made the earth tremble as the entire demon army charged toward Lindel's walls.

- *Roaaaaaaaar!!!*

- *Grrrrrrrr!!*

'I wonder how long they'll last.'

Lindel's walls weren't that strong because it wasn't located on the border like Castle Rock, and it was also supposed to be starting city for adventurers since the advent of the tutorial dungeons.

I was sure that they could last for a while as long as the Federation poured their mana into the walls, but Lindel wasn't that great against a siege.

- Pour more mana into the wall! We have to endure for as long as we can! We can't let them break through!

- These pesky humans sure are running wild. Where's the hero who will take the ax of the high priest Ballitos? *Ha!* I'll turn you into minced meat!

- Send reinforcements to the western region as quickly as possible! Hurry up! We can't let them break through.

- *Ah!*

- *Roaaaaaaaar!!*

- Goddess Benigoa is with us! The Swordsman of Light is with us!

'It quickly got violent. Geez… '

The Continental Union was probably thinking that they could prevent the demons from venturing beyond the walls, but that was impossible to do so in Lindel.

It didn't matter how great the commander in charge of the siege defense was. At some point, they would be forced to either give up the walls or break the walls down themselves to kill the smaller demons below.

I was sure that both sides had the same thought in mind.

It was an unprecedented large-scale street battle. A battle inside Lindel was inevitable, and that was exactly why this street battle was important. This skirmish would determine the number of soldiers that would go on to fight in the main battle.

Of course, they didn't have to be extremely desperate here, but they had to fight with that kind of determination without being sloppy.

The battlefield quickly became chaotic; they were obviously showing that kind of determination as they fought.

'Man, why are they… they're fighting so hard that I'm seriously getting goosebumps.'

Meanwhile, a certain region of Lindel had a high proportion of female adventurers and demons.

The battle between them looked fiercer than in any other region.

- Goddess Benigoa! Annihilate these dirty… demons!

- These dirty humans who don't know their places actually dare to harm me! Know your place, ignorant and stupid humans!

- Die! You demons! It is a humiliation to be under the same sky as you, filthy beings! Soldiers, give them no quarter! Light and justice still exist, and we must show them to those demons! Elune! Please annihilate these demons!

- You bitches are the ones who have to disappear from this land! Don't retreat! Proliferate, oh—darkness of the legion!

- Die! Die…!

- *Aaaaaah!*

- Cast a spell! Hurry up! Burn them down with holy power! Use your potions only on heavy injuries!

'You should treat any injuries, guys… '

- Don't even think about running back to hell, demons! Fight to the death…!

'You know you'll die if you don't go back to hell, right?'

I had no idea why they were so fierce, even though the battle had just begun. However, it quickly became clear that they were trying to set me up to become the main character of this battle.

The adventurers here definitely had a powerful priest with them because I could see flashes of light with every fierce shout about how they would annihilate the demons.

I wanted to see the priest's job, but I had to focus on the other regions of the battlefield, so I didn't have the luxury to do that.

The region where the high priests were located was obviously the main stage of the Battle of Lindel. As expected, I saw a variety of scenes. Ballitos, Rimoura, and a few high priests were there to show their overwhelming presence.

The mages were blocking Rimoura's large tentacles, while Ballitos—who was acting like he was enjoying human meat—was quietly standing on the battlefield with a massive kitchen knife in hand.

The other high priests were also oppressing the Continental Union with their own unique skills.

At this point, I could already see who would come here as a reinforcement.

It was a swordsman roaming the battlefield with a sword.

'Hyun-Sung… '

Kim Hyun-Sung had to be pushed to his limits.

'I need to make him consume his stamina.'

I needed to make him consume at least half of his stamina and mana by any means necessary. Otherwise, my weak body wouldn't stand a chance against him.

'Man, our Hyun-Sung is fighting hard. Hang in there! You can do it! Good job! That's it!'

CHAPTER 514
THE PLAGUE DRAGON ROARS

Belial, the ruler of many great demons, had told me that it was nigh impossible for me to use all his power. He could forcefully inject me with a large amount of mana, but the issue was that I couldn't really wield that mana for too long.

I could only wield a small amount of that mana, and it would only last for a minute. I would become stronger, but the power-up wouldn't be enough for me to fight Kim Hyun-Sung.

'Shit… '

[Dark Plaguelord - Semi-Mythic]

[A special job given by Belial, the 27th Legion Commander of the 72 Demon Lords.]

[The job is basically a branch of Black Mage, and it allows the job owner to control demon plagues that cannot be purified with ordinary holy power. The job has a few unique abilities, but they are unavailable due to the low job proficiency]

[Intelligence has increased by 7, and magic has increased by 10. You are knowledgeable in plagues and poison. The Semi-Mythic Job, Alchemist of Light, will be deactivated upon activating Dark Plaguelord using the unique ability, Job Change.]

My job demanded me to serve as a part of the rearguard to debuff enemies. It couldn't be considered a combat-type job at all, so it wasn't that great.

However, I would be extremely powerful as long as a few conditions were met.

Personally, I was satisfied with the job.

The job's name was Plaguelord, but it was a branch of Black Mage, so I could use basic black magic as well.

According to the job description, it seemed that I could manipulate plagues, which were no different from bioweapons. In other words, it was a perfect job for me.

Of course, I wasn't strong enough to use spells that would instantly kill people upon inhalation or skin contact, but my plagues could still turn someone into members of the undead after a certain period of time, or I could also make their skin rot upon contact with my plagues.

However, things would change dramatically if the assumption that my plagues would become extremely powerful using Belial's mana was true.

After all, I would be able to break through most of their defenses, and I would also be able to control the high-rank demons. Of course, I still wouldn't be able to put up much of a resistance against Kim Hyun-Sung.

Speaking of Kim Hyun-Sung, I saw him jumping around the battlefield. Ordinary spells and attacks couldn't pierce the mana surrounding his body. I was sure that there had been many people mocking him about how he was always covered in a layer of mana, but the thin layer of mana surrounding Kim Hyun-Sung was tougher than a tank.

Of course, it also increased his magic resistance.

'Advanced magic operation knowledge.'

It was a basic passive that high-rank adventurers would have, and Kim Hyun-Sung's magic operation skills had already exceeded the standards of humans. His personal shield could resist most spells, indirect attacks, or even debuffs, so it was a pretty useful passive.

He was wearing light armor as well, and he was moving across the battlefield as if he had long grown accustomed to wearing light armor.

I couldn't understand why he was wearing light armor even though he had enough mana to maintain his personal shield throughout the battle.

'Is that part of his traumas?'

If our lovely regressor had also lost to a plague scum in his past life…

'I understand why he's acting that way.'

It was also the best way to ensure that he would remain protected from all kinds of attacks. I reckoned that it would be impossible for me to break through Kim Hyun-Sung's current defenses even with Belial's power.

I could break his personal shield using physical attacks, but it wouldn't be that easy. It seemed that it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Kim Hyun-Sung was my natural enemy.

'Wow, how is he so fast?'

Kim Hyun-Sung jumped here and there like Hong Gil-Dong, but of course, speed had always been his greatest strength. He was a pretty balanced swordsman, but he was famous for being an extremely fast swordsman.

'Yeah, he's just that fast.'

The low-rank adventurers couldn't even see him. A speedy swordsman like him could eliminate the demons before they could even cast reverse summoning to return to hell. I was doing my best to pressure Kim Hyun-Sung, but he was really impressive.

Wherever help was needed, he would appear and swing his sword around.

It hadn't even been that long since he appeared on the front lines, but he had already sent a few major actors back to hell. If Kim Hyun-Sung were the raid boss of a dungeon, and I was a dungeon conqueror, I would have come to the conclusion that conquering Kim Hyun-Sung's dungeon was impossible.

He was so impressive that I had to rub my eyes just to make sure that I wasn't under an illusion or something.

"Miss Dialugia, don't just stand idle. Use your Plague Breath at him," I ordered.

- I-It's not Plague Breath…

"I thought you're already used to this by now?" I asked.

- Plague Breath… Please don't call it Plague Breath, please…

Dialugia was protesting, but she still took a deep breath. She released a short, piercing breath that flew toward Kim Hyun-Sung, but it ended up hitting the ground. It brushed past him as if Dialugia had missed.

It seemed that Kim Hyun-Sung was keeping tabs on me, even though he was currently fighting a high priest.

'He's a monster… ' I muttered to myself unknowingly. *'The plague scum from his past life was amazing, all right.'*

I was curious about how they managed to corner Kim Hyun-Sung until he got traumatized.

'It's pretty obvious. It's not like they have any other methods than that.'

They probably took the people Kim Hyun-Sung cherished as hostages or made him suffer mentally using wicked and dirty spells. Other than that, they couldn't have pushed Kim Hyun-Sung into a corner.

I thought about using that method as well, but the ending didn't need that kind of scene.

'Honestly, Light Ki-Young himself is the hostage… '

It would be difficult for me to stand a chance against him if I were to not use that trick, and that was why exhausting Kim Hyun-Sung was important.

I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung once again, and I saw him making a few mistakes.

However, it wasn't his fault.

'Man, Ji-Hye noona is going into overdrive… '

It was Lee Ji-Hye's fault.

'That's not how you execute the Kim Hyun-Sung tactic, but yeah, I guess it's understandable.'

In addition to having trouble with the details, Lee Ji-Hye's delivery of information was slow as well. She was so slow that Kim Hyun-Sung was moving faster than her thoughts.

I was sure that it was the case because I could see Kim Hyun-Sung stopping from time to time or suddenly changing directions. Overall, his pathing was bad. Lee Ji-Hye was definitely frustrated that the Kim Hyun-Sung tactic wasn't working as she intended.

Honestly, the biggest reason I could execute the Kim Hyun-Sung tactic was my eyes rather than my head. My brain couldn't see through the details, but my Mind's Eye allowed me to see the entire battlefield.

Lee Ji-Hye's perception was better than mine, but she didn't have my eyes that could extract a ton of information at once. Of course, she was capable of extracting information on her own, but there was definitely a big difference between her and me.

Kim Hyun-Sung was bringing in results, but he was frowning.

I instantly saw through his thoughts, and he was probably thinking along the lines of…

'This isn't it… '

Or…

'I need Mr. Ki-Young.'

A fancy car would perform better in the hands of a veteran driver. I wasn't really criticizing her for being unable to execute the Kim Hyun-Sung tactic properly because her inability to do so was actually in my favor.

Since Lee Ji-Hye couldn't quite grasp every detail of the ever-changing battlefield, she decided to multitask.

Lee Ji-Hye would send Kim Hyun-Sung coordinates where a target that had to be eliminated could be found, but the battle was ever-changing, so Kim Hyun-Sung was frequently running around in circles.

As an example, Kim Hyun-Sung received an order to eliminate a high priest near the base, but the high priest had already gone back to hell before Kim Hyun-Sung even reached his destination.

Kim Hyun-Sung also received an order to defeat the flankers that were threatening the rearguard, but upon arriving at the coordinates, the tanks had already secured the perimeter.

He wasn't always running around in circles, but he was getting exhausted because the orders were often inaccurate. He looked so tired that I felt ashamed about the thought of making him run around for eight hours.

It hadn't even been three hours since he started fighting, but he already looked extremely tired.

'Tsk… '

The Kim Hyun-Sung tactic was extremely strong, so he had no choice but to stay on the battlefield. If it hadn't been for Kim Hyun-Sung, Lindel's walls would have fallen a long time ago. He was simply that impressive.

- *Ha… ha… ha…*

His head was covered in sweat. He was trying to collect his breath, so he didn't even have the luxury to wipe off the blood on his face. He was constantly running around to balance the battlefield.

Time went on, and he got even more exhausted.

- *Ha… ha…*

Moments later, Kim Hyun-Sung removed his magic armor to save mana. As a result, wounds started to appear on his body. Obviously, the wounds weren't that serious, so I wasn't really worried about him. However, those wounds would definitely make him feel uncomfortable. The holy power he received from the priests healed him, but those injuries still consumed his stamina.

"Please use Plague Breath. The penetrating kind…" I ordered.

- I told you that it's not called Plague Breath, *whoo…!*

Booooooooom!

“Wait, why did you actually hit him?!” I shouted.

- Y-You told me to fire it…

“You shouldn’t have hurt him! My goal is to exhaust him a bit more, but you actually hit him…” I told her.

- I didn’t want to fire it either. I only did it because you told me to do it. Attacks like the Plague Breath—I don’t want to use them. *Ah…* thankfully, I don’t think he got hurt. He moved to doge it, but I think he blocked it with his sword. I don’t think it’ll affect his movements.

“Please make sure to barely miss him, Miss Dialugia,” I requested.

- I’m doing my best…

Kim Hyun-Sung was bound to lose his focus the more exhausted he became, and his sharp senses would dull as well.

‘I guess it’s about time I tell them to withdraw.’

He was breathing heavily, and he looked like he was pushing himself to go beyond his limits.

I would have given him time to rest because a catch-and-release method was one of the most efficient methods to fight in a war, but it was absolutely impossible to make Kim Hyun-Sung retreat.

Seeing that, I started fixing my outfit and mask.

‘That’s my sign to enter… ’

Lee Ji-Hye wasn’t telling me to enter through the crumbling walls.

I was sure that the crumbling walls would serve as a distraction for the Continental Union troops, so I would enter Lindel from the other side. I had the Plague Dragon, so a wall was useless against me.

Anyway, my plan was to enter Lindel from the northwest, where the anti-air defense systems were disabled.

“Don’t forget to act like you have an actual plague. The script says that you have to roar after descending. I want you to *roaaaar* or make a sound similar to that,” I told her.

- Please…

“Okay, let’s take out the roaring part. It’s unfortunate, so just please howl louder than usual,” I said.

- Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very, very much.

The stage was great, and it had been four hours since the battle began. Things had progressed quite faster than expected, but it was all because everyone was exhausted both physically and mentally.

The aces of the Continental Union, like Cha Hee-Ra and the members of the Blue Guild, were currently fighting the high priests. The anti-air troops were missing from the northwestern wall, so it was the perfect opportunity for me to make my entrance.

I left the situation room and wore my half-mask. I couldn’t let the public see the disgraceful sight of me struggling to climb on top of Dialugia, so Dialugia lowered her head in dissatisfaction, which allowed me to easily climb on top of her.

- *Graaaaaaaaaaaagh!!!*

It seemed that she really didn’t want to roar because she howled even louder than usual. When all eyes landed on us, Dialugia flapped her wings and soared into the skies of Lindel.

I could see the despair on their faces. It was a bit funny to see them staring at us in disbelief, but I could understand their feelings. After all, there were people here who were seeing Dialugia’s current appearance for the first time.

There was a loud boom as Dialugia landed on Lindel’s city square. It had been quite a while since Lindel was invaded by enemies, but this time, the invader was much more powerful than any other previous invaders.

The Plague Dragon crushed the Blue Guild's Guild House and swept her large tail across the city square, devastating everything. She then climbed up the tall clock tower using her large claws and roared at mankind's small but burning ember.

- *Roaaaaaaaaaaar!*

'I thought you weren't going to roar?'

CHAPTER 515
ENCOUNTER (1)

I was a bit flustered, but I couldn't show it. I wondered if Dialugia's acting skill was the same as Kim Ye-Ri, but I could see that she was a bit worse because she was wearing her heart on her sleeve.

She was aware of what she said, but she started roaring without realizing it. She didn't say anything because what she did was as embarrassing as calling one's teacher *mom*.

Normally, I would have teased her, but I needed her, so I kept my remark to myself.

In addition, it was more important to quietly support her right now.

'…'

- So, this is…

'I won't say anything else, so please prepare yourself.'

- What?

'It's coming, so get ready.'

- You mean…

'Get rid of the things around us.'

- *Ah*, okay.

Actions over words. Dialugia somewhat knew what I was thinking, so she unleashed her Plague Breath in the surroundings. The tall buildings collapsed so easily that it felt like the sturdy-looking Lindel I had been seeing up until now was all a lie.

Craaaaaaack!

Booooooooooooom!

'Awww, that restaurant serves really good food… '

The buildings and places where I made great memories were collapsing.

'I remember that cafe and bar being nice as well. Man, how unfortunate… '

The same thing happened to the symbol of Lindel.

'I didn't really like that statue.'

The old buildings started collapsing as well.

'That's… going to take some time to restore.'

If I were to exaggerate a bit, a sixth of Lindel collapsed in the blink of an eye. Many people stared at us as we devastated a portion of Lindel in a matter of seconds. Some of them looked as if they had lost everything.

From the city square to the Guild House, everything was destroyed, and I was sure that it was a surreal sight, especially to the denizens of Lindel.

Who could remain calm after seeing their hometown being devastated right in front of their eyes?

They were obviously angry and bitter. A few emotional people joined the battle while biting their lips. I felt kind of bad, but I—no, we needed this to happen for our project.

However, we were doing this not just to leave the biggest scar on Lindel, but we also wanted to prevent Kim Hyun-Sung from using the terrain to his advantage. If that squirrel-like swordsman had places to hide, I wouldn't be able to fight him properly.

It didn't matter even if I had Mind's Eye because he would be too fast for me to track.

'Nice. Great…!'

I could definitely secure my own escape route with a catalyst, and fortunately, I got a bunch of catalysts from the demons. Still, I couldn't help but feel nervous because I

knew why mankind was still holding onto the sliver of hope despite their situation.

I was also nervous that perhaps Ji-Hye noona was conspiring with Dialugia.

The troops outside were busy blocking the wave of demons. The reserve forces were busy as well, so no one could stop me here. In addition, it wouldn't make sense for the supply team or the remaining troops to fight Dialugia and Doom Ki-Young.

However, it also didn't make sense that they simply allowed Dialugia to use her special Plague Breath to destroy the city. The fact that they allowed us to enter so easily meant that the Continental Union had a trick up its sleeve.

Unfortunately, I had already deduced their trick.

'Get ready.'

- Where?

'The wall. The southeast side, to be exact. Just breathe in, but don't release it.'

- Are you telling me to shoot my breath to those humans?

'The people there are the ones we can kill. Since when did you start liking humans so much? And did you not hear me? I didn't tell you to shoot it; I just told you to breathe in.'

- So what… do you mean by that exactly…

'Below on your six. Shoot it out in a cone!'

- Shit. You should have told me sooner!

'From now on, don't say anything, don't think about anything. Just listen to my orders, and I want you to only make decisions whenever I tell you to do so.'

Grrr!

Dialugia had to have agreed because she turned her head quietly. However, she still looked slightly anxious as she inhaled and prepared her Plague Breath.

She couldn't see it, but I was sure she knew what I was trying to say. Dialugia was a dragon, but she was bound to have blind spots, especially against something tiny but extremely fast. If it hadn't been for me, she wouldn't have noticed him.

As expected, I saw *him* walking through the debris and smoke.

'Damn it, it's nice to see you, Hyun-Sung!'

Kim Hyun-Sung was biting his lips, but his face was determined.

Unfortunately, the exhaustion Kim Hyun-Sung I had seen earlier was no longer there. It seemed like he was being driven by the determination to save me, and his determination actually made me feel bad.

However, the feeling was only temporary.

I started to become nervous when he started running toward me with barely any injuries. I started thinking about the things that were about to happen and my current situation while tapping my thigh with my finger.

Dialugia's Plague Breath wasn't that great at penetrating tough defenses, so it couldn't remove Kim Hyun-Sung's magic armor. However, I was sure that we would be able to deplete his stamina, but…

'It's meaningless.'

- What should I…

'Don't ask me any questions because I don't have time to answer. Fly. While flying to the tallest building, draw a line based on the coordinates I have given you.'

- Okay.

'It's definitely worth a try.'

I could write a Regressor Instruction Manual, so there was no need for me to write a Dialugia Instruction Manual. Dialugia flew swiftly like a squirrel. Obviously, she didn't look as cute as a flying squirrel because she was too heavy.

She leaped into the air, and the clock tower crumbled. The wind that her wings were

generating was also strong enough to destroy the buildings that were still standing somehow.

In addition, she was also releasing her Plague Breath to restrict Kim Hyun-Sung's movements.

- *Roooooooooar!!*

I could see where Kim Hyun-Sung was going to move. I snapped my fingers after scattering catalysts in the path I had plotted earlier. To be exact, the catalysts were synthesized items made out of dragon bones and demon bones.

I used them to interrupt Kim Hyun-Sung's movements, but I was also trying to keep him in one place.

Craaaaaaack!

'Nice visuals.'

When I was still the Alchemist of Light, I couldn't use my catalysts after a certain range, but the range changed after I became the Dark Plaguelord.

The bones filling up the ruins of Lindel were a sight to see as a large arm made out of bones emerged to grab Kim Hyun-Sung. I also hurled a few undead skeletons, so I could definitely say that I managed to create a dungeon.

Craaaaaack!

Craaaaaaaaaaaack!!

Booooooom!!

The bony palm either pounded the ground or swung itself.

The skeletons crumbled upon being struck by the palm.

'Damn… it… '

It was an impressive sight to see a human being surrounded by skeletons while facing a bony arm the size of a building. It was even more impressive considering

that hundreds of those arms surrounded him. Kim Hyun-Sung made his way through the wave of bones—which was as overwhelming as a disaster—as if he was surfing on tidal waves. My jaw dropped at the sight.

He blocked whatever he couldn't dodge, and he destroyed whatever he couldn't block.

I knew that Kim Hyun-Sung was strong enough to destroy the bones, but I didn't expect them to be annihilated so easily. The trump card I thought would buy me some time was being destroyed as if they were pieces of paper, so I couldn't help but frown at the sight.

I wasn't used to using the skills of the Dark Plaguelord, but I still channeled a spell. A faint smoke swirled around my hand, and the plague that took the form of a ghost slowly floated away from my hand.

It couldn't move that fast, but it was tiny and stealthy.

'I can't let it go on like this. This is useless now… '

My plan was to infect Kim Hyun-Sung with this plague and let him suffer from it because that was the surest way I could inflict some damage on him.

Unfortunately, he broke through the first obstacle as if he were taking candy from a baby, ruining my plans.

'This is bad… '

"I don't care even if you have to use Breath on him or whatever, just make sure that he's at least a hundred meters away from us. Don't attack him with your claws, and don't even think about headbutting him. Use only ranged attacks, and in the worst-case scenario, swing your tail," I said.

- I understand. But… is it even possible to challenge him? I could feel that you have become stronger, but that human…

"I'm busy thinking right now since our first plan cannot be executed anymore. No matter how much I think about it, he's the problem. If we can stop him for a bit…" I said.

'I can create a more beautiful and gruesome scene.'

The people wouldn't appreciate it because it would be impossible to film a touching scene if the camera couldn't even capture that scene. At this rate, the people would only see Kim Hyun-Sung jumping out of nowhere and hitting me in the head.

If that were to happen, my work so far would be in vain.

I grabbed my head momentarily, feeling worried…

"Mr. Ki-Young!" Kim Hyun-Sung suddenly yelled at me.

'Ah… this is…!'

I had always been the best at adapting, so I immediately created a guideline on what I should do right now.

"*Aaaarghh!*"

Dialugia seemed like she was questioning if I had gone crazy when I grabbed my head as if I were in excruciating pain, but Kim Hyun-Sung's reaction was different.

"I-It's me, Hyun-Sung! My voice! Can you hear my voice?!" he yelled.

'Oh my, you sound so desperate. Your voice… '

"Mr. Ki-Young! Mr. Ki-Young! Are you still in there? Mr. Ki-Young! Open your eyes! Please…! Please!" he continued.

'Oh, man.'

His voice was one of the saddest voices I had ever heard. It was clear that he really wanted me to hear his voice because he was yelling at me while channeling mana directly in front of his mouth to amplify his voice.

"I'll… I'll come and rescue you right now!" he added.

His eyes were fixated on me as well.

'This guy… he still hasn't come to his senses. That's how you get backstabbed, man.'

“Wait there for a bit. I’ll… be there soon,” he said.

However, it seemed like he hadn’t let his guard down at all.

“AAAARGHHH!” I screamed even louder because I had to make him lower his guard.

Fortunately, my scream made him feel even more anxious, which created more tension.

He was exhausted and desperate, so he wasn’t looking around at all. Unfortunately, accidents could happen in the blink of an eye.

He was currently breaking through the wave of skeletons using his combat sense alone, but it seemed that he didn’t notice the ghost I sent over to him earlier.

Soon, I saw Kim Hyun-Sung limping on his way over to me.

The ghost successfully pierced his magic armor.

‘I think I’m really strong… Seriously, how did I get so strong?’

I was once a novice who couldn’t even defeat a single monster from the tutorial dungeon, but I had already become strong enough to injure the leg of the awakened regressor.

My heart broke at the sight, but I felt proud of myself as well.

CHAPTER 516
PLEASE KILL ME (1)

'He's probably fine, right?'

Kim Hyun-Sung was moving while biting his lips. He had to have realized that he had made a mistake because his expression turned grim. However, he continued talking to me. I was sure that he had no other choice because he probably thought that this was the best method. Of course, I continued reacting to him.

He kept on calling my name out desperately, and his voice broke my heart.

"Mr. Ki-Young, it's me!" Kim Hyun-Sung exclaimed.

'I know, man… '

"Please open your eyes…" he begged.

'They're open.'

"Can you hear my voice?" he asked.

'I can hear you clearly.'

Rather than swinging his sword, it seemed like he was thinking that delivering his voice to Light Ki-Young was more important. He had to have thought that making me come back to my senses somehow was the top priority because he continued crying out with that sad and desperate voice of his.

He was certain that his desperate cries were making me grab my head. I knew my plan was going to be somewhat effective, but it was more effective than I thought.

'That's why you ended up in that position in your past life, man.'

There was a saying about how a third party couldn't change a person's nature. Seeing Kim Hyun-Sung's reaction made me understand why the saying existed in the first

place.

He seemed like he didn't care about his body at all. While watching him trying his best to get me to return to my original self, I was able to deduce more information about what the regressor's past life was like.

It wasn't really that hard to deduce because it seemed like he had decided to abandon his safety. He had to be more worried about my head rather than his leg because he continued looking at me while dodging and blocking Dialugia and the skeletons' attacks.

I winced and grabbed my head once more as if I were in pain, and I heard Kim Hyun-Sung yelling at me once again. His reaction made me realize that this was the perfect time for the masked half of my body to reach out to him. Of course, I made sure that Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't be able to reach me by giving orders to Dialugia at the same time.

He was trying his best, but Diaugia was doing better than I thought.

'She's pretty strong.'

I felt stupid for forgetting the fact that out of the Legendary-rank beings, she was a high-ranked Legendary. Of course, the biggest issue was the sea of skeletons surrounding him. However, he also couldn't afford to ignore Dialugia's Plague Breath.

'Moreover… '

Kim Hyun-Sung had to have probably realized that there were ghost plagues hiding in the wave of skeletons, so he had to be extra careful. I was sure he felt annoyed and frustrated by all the things I had created for him on this battlefield.

'I have to exhaust him.'

Otherwise, my one-on-one battle against Kim Hyun-Sung couldn't proceed. If he were in his best condition, I would have made sure to stay as far away as I could from him, but he wasn't at his peak right now. Lee Ji-Hye's mismanagement exhausted him, and he was covered in light injuries. He was just in a fierce battle for a few hours on the battlefield, so it would be strange if he wasn't tired. In addition…

'Is his leg okay?'

He also couldn't move his leg properly.

The ghost plague that penetrated him seemed like it was making his leg feel as heavy as lead, and it wasn't moving according to his wishes anymore. He was suppressing it as much as he could using his mana, but he would soon lose control of his leg.

His movement was being restricted little by little, and rather than dodging while saving his mana, he started swinging his sword frequently. Basically, the number of attacks he couldn't dodge had increased, and his change in attitude naturally changed the battle.

Booooooooom!!!

Craaaaaack!!!

The wave of skeletons would split into two whenever Kim Hyun-Sung swung his sword, and he was also keeping an eye out for Dialugia's Breaths. The ruined city was starting to change, and I couldn't help but bite my lips.

Booooooom!!!

There was an explosion as a mountain of large skeletons flew into the air again. The monster's numerous gigantic arms split in half at the same time, and I was actually struggling to keep up with the number of destroyed skeletons.

Kim Hyun-Sung was so overwhelmingly powerful that I probably would have retired at least ten times by now if it hadn't been for Belial's mana. However, I couldn't deny the fact he was creating an unrealistic sight.

I could already deduce the audience members' feelings while they were watching this scene.

I surreptitiously glanced at the audience members, and I saw them looking at us in a daze. They seemed to have forgotten that they were in the middle of fighting the demons outside.

"No… way…"

"Is this really a battle between humans…? Is he really… human…?"

“What in the world…?”

I could understand their feelings. After all, it simply didn’t make sense that an entire city would be devastated by a fight between two human beings—a man who had covered at least half of the city in a tidal wave of corrupted skeletons while riding on a corrupted dragon and a swordsman who was strong enough to cut through or deflect all attacks.

Perhaps it was because Kim Hyun-Sung was covered in a faint light, but I was sure that everyone could easily deduce who was standing on the side of the light between the two of us.

‘Yeah, nice. You’re doing great!’

Obviously, the audience members became more focused on our fight. My masked side continued extending his hand out as if he was still resisting, and it was important to show Kim Hyun-Sung that I could kill him quite easily if Light Ki-Young wasn’t resisting.

I snapped my fingers again, and Rimoura’s tentacles started flying toward him. I was suppressing him while showing him that Doom Ki-Young’s Phase One was just a warm-up.

“This is fun. Very fun. *Hahaha!*” It was a cheesy line, but saying lines like this once in a while would keep the audience enthralled.

Our lovely regressor had encountered Rimoura’s tentacles before, so he looked a bit wary against them, but those tentacles weren’t that strong. I was simply using them as a utility skill. There were many tentacles, and they looked quite strong on the outside.

‘This is so awesome.’

Imagine many tentacles the size of a house swinging around. The tentacles weren’t that strong, but they were so huge that they were basically weapons of mass destruction.

I was sure that the audience members were convinced that they were dangerous, and the way our lovely regressor sliced his way out of the tentacles in a stylish manner made the entire scene look a bit unreal.

Many of the audience members had abilities beyond human comprehension, but I was sure that even they couldn't comprehend this scene.

Craaaaaaaack!!!

Booooooooooom!!!

"Crazy…"

- *Roooooooooooar!!!*

Craaaaack!!!

"*Hahahaha!*"

"What in the world…"

"Am I… dreaming right now?"

"Oh god…!"

"Oh Benigoa…!"

Booooooooooom!!!

Kim Hyun-Sung moved even faster, as if he was responding to the explosions. He didn't stop talking because his top priority was to bring me back from the abyss.

"Can you hear my voice? Mr. Ki-Young. Please… if you can hear me… answer me. Please…!" Kim Hyun-Sung begged.

Of course, I could hear his voice, but I didn't answer.

"Mr. Ki-Young, please… answer me," he said.

'Ha… this guy… '

"You said… you'd be waiting for me. Please open your eyes. I know you can overcome this. I believe that you won't give in and that you're still there… I believe it," he continued.

"…"

"I won't give up either, no matter what. Please… please don't give up. You helped me realize that I'm not alone. You're not alone as well. Everyone is fighting for you, Mr. Ki-Young…" he continued.

"Hyung-nim, hyung-nim! Open your eyes. Please open your eyes!" Park Deok-Gu begged.

'Park Deok-Gu, that pig… '

"When you told me that if you can do it, I can do it better, I know you weren't lying when you said it, and I know that very well. Hyung-nim… *kgh*… I only became strong because of you. You paved the way for my survival in the tutorial dungeon," he continued.

"…"

"I already know that you haven't completely fallen for the demons. This younger brother of yours already knows. I know that you're still fighting and that you're going to overcome all this soon!" he added.

"…"

"Lee Ki-Young, you bastard! Come to your senses, you scum! Do you really want to see this place disappear from the face of the earth?!"

'Even Hee-Ra noona is yelling at me… '

"You're the one who suggested that we live a good life. If you're a man, then snap out of it!" she added.

'Man, this is really making me cringe, but it's not bad.'

I looked around excitedly at the people fighting the demons, and they seemed to have realized what Kim Hyun-Sung was trying to do because they looked at me. The Guild Members of the Blue Guild—including the exhausted Elena and Sun Hee-Young—raised their voices.

Those who had even the slightest connection to me cried out to me while crying.

The sight was so touching that I had to give them fan service by acting like I was in excruciating pain.

“Damn it! Damn it…! Damn it all…!” I screamed.

Kim Hyun-Sung definitely felt like it was his chance because he called out my name and said, “Everyone… is waiting for you. Everyone is…”

I wasn’t sure when he arrived in front of me, but he was standing there with a smile. The skeletons and tentacles had stopped moving, and the cacophony of noises was replaced by silence.

“You held my hand. Now, it’s my turn. Please… open… your eyes,” he said cautiously.

“…”

“There are still many things I want to talk to you about, and there are still many things I want to do with you. We still have to go on that picnic with our guild members, and we still have to visit the Mirror Lake that Miss Ha-Yan always wanted to visit… This time, we’re going to visit it,” he suggested.

Kim Hyun-Sung reached out with his hand, and he smiled at me as he stood there with his injured body. He seemed certain that I could hear his voice, but he became filled with despair when he saw my face.

Tears were rolling down the uncovered side of my face…

‘Nice.’

I had been wanting to say this line…

“Please… kill… me.”

Kim Hyun-Sung was at a loss for words.

‘I killed it!’

CHAPTER 517
PLEASE KILL ME (2)

"Please… kill… me…" I begged.

I acted like I was in extreme pain while unleashing my fake tears. I stared at Kim Hyun-Sung as if I couldn't take it anymore and simply wanted things to end right there and then.

Kim Hyun-Sung was stupefied. I felt like shouting in delight because of my near-perfect acting, but I obviously couldn't do something like that. I had to look as sad and as desperate as possible. I cringed to the point that my fingers and toes curled in, but this scene was more important than anything else.

'This is the pinnacle of self-sacrifice. Indeed.'

The will to give up my life for the peace of the continent.

Goosebumps broke out all over me when I thought about how every living being on this continent was watching this scene at the moment. I could already deduce what they were feeling when they heard the corrupted Light Ki-Young asking to be killed.

It wasn't just Kim Hyun-Sung.

Park Deok-Gu, Cha Hee-Ra, and everyone else who had been rooting for me just now was now staring at me with sadness.

Kim Hyun-Sung still looked like he had no idea what to say, so I decided to speak.

"Before it's too late…"

"Mr. K-Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung stuttered and clenched his fists.

"You have to do it… Mr. Hyun-Sung. Any longer—" I paused.

"Have you come back to your senses?!" he asked.

"AAAARGH*!*"

"Mr. Ki-Young!"

"*Aaaah!*"

"Hurry—*Aaaargh!*" I yelled.

"Mr. Ki-Young…!"

He had to have realized that something was wrong because he immediately ran toward me, but what greeted him wasn't Light Ki-Young's warm arms, but Dialugia's claw.

Boom!

There was a loud explosion as Dialugia sent him flying.

- I-I think I hit him…

'I'm sure he survived that. People are more focused on us than I thought, and isn't it more beautiful to see both of us covered in scars?'

- How… With a human like him—Wait, just now… How could you…! T-That kind of dialogue… Do you really not have even an ounce of shame?

Shame? Could I eat that?

"You nauseating hum—Please… *Argh!* I'm still…! *Keugh!*"

"…"

"Mr. Hyun-Sung… Mr. Hyun-Sung, please…! *Keugh… ugh… ha… ha… ha*," I begged.

"…"

"*AAAAAAARGH…! Haaa, haaa…* I'm begging you…!" I added.

"…"

I was sure that this was the hardest acting I had ever done in my entire life, and I was confident that both Ahn Ki-Mo and Kim Ye-Ri couldn't possibly surpass me right now.

The reveal of the internal struggle between Light Ki-Young and Doom Ki-Young was more gruesome than any other battles so far. My face distorted, and I started twisting before either vomiting or grabbing my chest.

There was a vicious smile on my lips, but my sad eyes kept on unleashing fake tears.

In addition to resisting evil, I was also breathing heavily as if I had already reached my limits.

I was sure that the number of viewers had shot through the roof, and every human being on the continent was definitely praying while watching the scene unfold.

They were definitely praying for Father Lee Ki-Young's victory against Doom Ki-Young; they were definitely praying that he would have enough strength to resist Belial's power and fight next to the light once more.

I was sure that they were waiting for a miracle, but a director was supposed to betray their audience's expectations.

The scene of Light Ki-Young coming out to say his last words were cut short because Doom Ki-Young regained control over Father Lee Ki-Young's fleshly body once more.

"*Hahaha…*" Doom Ki-Young wiped his tears and fixed his mask. He revealed the evilest smile imaginable and unleashed a signal, notifying everyone that he was in control once more.

"*Hahahaha!*" The childish laugh was so cringey, but it was a shocking scene that surely brought despair to some people.

Kim Hyun-Sung was stupefied as he walked backward while staring at the ink-like smoke twirling around me. I was worried because he looked like he had made up his mind about something.

'He's not going to actually kill me, right?'

There was no way he would kill me. He was the same lovely regressor who had been

talking to me just a few moments ago, right?

'I'll never give up… '

He even said that to me, and he was the type of person who would strive to keep his word no matter what, so there was no way he would give up on me. I was sure that he simply decided to incapacitate me before trying to bring me back to my senses.

I really hope that he was trying to do that rather than just killing me outright…

I stared at him, slightly worried, but Kim Hyun-Sung's expression was ice cold.

'No way, right? Hyun-Sung, we're still friends, right?'

I was worried that he would say something like—I'm sorry, Mr. Ki-Young. Since you want to sacrifice yourself, then I can only oblige—Fortunately, he didn't say something like that.

However, he glared at me and said coldly, "Give him back. That body isn't yours, you bastard."

"He's me, and I'm him. How dare a mere human speak like that to me. You don't know anything, you dumb human," I said.

"You're not him," he said.

"Your thoughts won't change anything. One's nature can't change," I told him.

"Give him back, you bastard," he repeated.

"No way," I said.

"Give him back…" he mumbled.

"What are you, a parrot?" I asked.

"Give him back, give him back, give him back now, you piece of shit! You bastard…!"

'Wait, why are you cursing like that, Hyun-Sung… '

“Dumbass…” I said.

“You bastard…!” he screamed and charged at me

‘What’s wrong with him? Shit, he’s out of his mind. Damn it! What’s wrong with you?!’

I wasn’t sure what was going on, but his gaze was telling me that he wasn’t in his right mind. His hand holding his sword was drenched in blood, and he looked like he couldn’t care less about defending himself.

He reminded me of Cha Hee-Ra.

This was my first time seeing him so furious, and the pressure he was exuding made it hard for me to breathe, even though he was at least a hundred meters away.

I felt like a rat in front of a cat—no, more like a rat in front of a tiger. I shrank instinctively, and I felt like I was going to shit my pants. Light Ki-Young’s survival radar rang furiously, and I wanted to collapse to the ground right now and surrender.

However…

“*Hahaha!* This is fun! This is *really* fun…!” I laughed.

I was too immersed in my role that my mouth automatically started speaking nonsense.

‘Damn it, what do I do? Dialugia… Shit…!’

- I don’t know. I’ll do my best to stop him…

“You bastard…!” Kim Hyun-Sung yelled.

‘Breath! Damn it! Breath!’

- I know!

‘Hurryyyyyy!’

- Don’t rush me!

Booooooooooooom!

"What?"

Kim Hyun-Sung somehow managed to slice Dialugia's Plague Breath into two. Dialugia panicked and swung her claws at the approaching Kim Hyun-Sung, but the latter was undeterred. He gathered as much mana as he could to attack.

Our top priority was to retreat, and I was sure that Dialugia realized that she had made a mistake because she immediately flapped her wings. Unfortunately, it was too late.

Kim Hyun-Sung was sent rolling away, but he managed to point his sword at us.

Boooooooom!

There was an incomprehensible sound, and I couldn't quite grasp Dialugia's disgraceful fall from the skies. I recovered my balance, but I ended up falling in the same direction as Dialugia.

I had no idea how he arrived in front of me, but Kim Hyun-Sung extended his hand toward me. Kim Hyun-Sung bit his lips while clenching his fists.

'Why are you gritting your teeth like that?'

However, the conflict in his eyes only lasted for a moment. He looked like he had finally made a decision and reached out for my face.

I hurriedly called out to Belial. *'Belial! I'm dying… I'm dying!'*

The uncontrollable lump of mana within me burst out like a deluge. The mana assumed the figure of a massive demon and enveloped me. The demon looked like Belial, but the difference was that it was made from mana that could be seen with the naked eye.

This was my first time seeing mana being used like this.

'He's actually going to hit me!'

However, I thought that it shouldn't be that bad for me to take a single hit from Kim

Hyun-Sung, considering the amount of mana he barely managed to gather.

'Huuuh?!'

Booooooooom!

However, the impact that I felt made me tremble all over.

'Aaaargh!'

I instinctively suppressed my screams, but I had no idea what was going on.

I couldn't tell if I was being bounced around somewhere or if I was flying somewhere else. To make matters worse, the impact I received was so powerful that I actually felt like I was suffocating. When I came to my senses, I found myself in an unknown place.

Craaaaaaack!!!

"*Cough! Cough!*"

I couldn't stop coughing.

'Damn it. I'm alive, right?'

Belial's mana took the brunt of the attack, but I still got injured.

My legs were trembling, but I mumbled, "It's fun…! It's really fun!"

'It's not fun. I want to go home. I don't want to do this anymore… Damn it…!'

However, Belial's mana seemed deaf to my wishes as it pulled me up and made me punch Kim Hyun-Sung. Kim Hyun-Sung turned his attack into a block, and he was sent rolling away by the impact. However, he reappeared in front of me in the blink of an eye and swung his sword once more.

'I'll probably look pathetic if I were to ask him to spare me, right?'

There was a loud boom as another powerful impact was transmitted to me once more from Belial's mana. Belial's mana was durable enough to block the attack, but

the impact that I felt was definitely real.

It seemed that not even Belial could dampen the shockwave of Kim Hyun-Sung's attacks. The sight made it seem like one of the monsters was going easy on the other, but the current situation was definitely a fight between monsters.

I gulped out of nervousness at the realization, but the way the two monsters exchanged attacks made the entire scene look a bit more melancholic and intense. In addition, the way Kim Hyun-Sung kept on swinging his sword while covered in blood broke my heart.

'Man, Hyun-Suuuunggggg… '

"Damn it…!" Kim Hyun-Sung yelled.

"…"

"Damn it…!" he repeated.

"*Ha… Hahahaha!*" I laughed.

"*Aaaahhh…!*"

It was unlike him to go beyond his limits, and I could see that he was truly desperate because he was beating up his paralyzed leg.

The battle continued, and Belial's mana was starting to deplete while more injuries started to appear all over Kim Hyun-Sung. Both of us were having trouble moving because we were reaching our limits, and it wasn't really strange.

After all, we had been exchanging moves for a few hours by now.

The battle was in a lull.

Everyone had already reached their limits, so they could only watch the gruesome fight.

"*Ha, ha*, you're not bad… for a piece of trash," I commented.

"I can save you," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“What are you—”

“I can save you. I can…” he repeated.

“…”

“I can save you this time. This time… I’ll save you no matter what,” he said. Anyone could tell from his anguished look that his mind was reaching its limits. I was enjoying the situation, but the sight pricked and made a scar in my conscience.

“I can save you, Mr. Ki-Young. I’m sure… no matter what… so please trust me and hang in there. Trust me and hang in there…” he muttered.

Kim Hyun-Sung was desperately holding back his tears as he stood in the middle of Lindel’s ruins.

CHAPTER 518
RISING LIGHT (1)

How should I[1] describe the fight between the Swordsman of Light and the Corrupted Saint?

- I'll save you. So… hang in there just a bit longer.

-…

- Just endure it for a bit longer. I'm sure you can do it.

If the members of the future generation asked us about this fight, then we would give them this answer—it was a fight straight out of a legend, and it was also an extremely sad fight between two people.

It was a fight that didn't make much sense because it was so unreal, but we could understand their feelings. We couldn't feel their pain, but we understood it.

I was sure that it wouldn't be enough to describe such a fight, but it was the best way to describe it. I was sure that the people gathered here thought the same. I couldn't help but stare absentmindedly at the sky and focus on the unfolding story.

"You're not human…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'No, he's definitely human. She created him Herself, and he's as insignificant as us.'

"Monster…" he added.

'No, he's not a monster. He's as strong as Her, but he's definitely not a monster. He's more human than anyone else. Yeah, I'm sure of it.'

I couldn't help but mutter Benigoa's name while watching the scene I couldn't quite describe. I was just a priest apprentice, so I couldn't stand on the same battlefield as them, but I was still a priest of the goddess.

Therefore, I had to watch this fight.

I had to memorize every single detail for the future generation.

The large corrupted mana enveloping the Corrupted Saint made the latter swing his arm, and the ruined city was devastated once more. There was a loud explosion as the Swordsman of Light was sent flying, but he stood up once more.

I was sure that even those who weren't familiar with fighting could see that the Swordsman of Light was at his limit.

We could see that he could no longer move as swiftly as before, and we could see that he would definitely be in mortal danger at this rate.

We were hoping that he would stop fighting.

- This time, no matter what…

He was covered in blood and was limping, but he stood up as if his injuries were nothing. He was coughing up blood, but he lifted his sword once more.

- This time… no matter what…

He looked like a cacophony of emotions that I couldn't really describe. He looked the saddest out of everyone there, and he looked like he was carrying the most burden out of everyone.

While balancing on his trembling legs, he rushed at the Corrupted Saint once more.

The surroundings became quiet. Those who were praying, those who were crying because they were afraid of the end of the world, and those who were incessantly cursing the demons went quiet.

They stared intently at the magic hologram.

The soldiers were doing the same and stared at the unfolding fight with desperate hearts.

I was sure that everyone felt the same. The Swordsman of Light was swinging his sword, while the Corrupted Saint defended himself using a clump of mana that I

couldn’t quite describe.

In every collision, the Swordsman of Light would call out to the Corrupted Saint. The blows they were exchanging were so powerful that they were literally changing the nearby terrain, but the people watching the battle didn’t really notice that.

How could they notice it when they weren’t at the scene?

Time passed, and the closer they were to their absolute limits, the harder I was clenching my fists. I had no idea just how many minutes—no, how many hours had passed, but the fight was still ongoing.

I had long lost count of how many times the Swordsman of Light crashed to the ground and stood up, but he looked like a tattered rag right now. Meanwhile, the otherworldly mana surrounding the Corrupted Saint seemed to be on the verge of extinguishing.

- I can save you.

- Stop it!

- Wait for me…

- Stop talking nonsense! You piece of shit!

- I trust you…

-…

- I trust you just as much as you trust me.

Tears rolled down from the Corrupted Saint’s uncovered eye, and the Swordsman of Light poured mana into the arm that had long gotten limp from the exhaustion.

The hand holding his sword was bleeding, but he continued swinging his sword with the help of his limping arm.

There wasn’t a holy war that was as beautiful as this, and there was no hero who could be as heroic as him.

The Corrupted Saint had cried out and begged to be killed because he didn't want to live his life after being corrupted, and he was back—he was begging to be killed once more.

And that was when I heard prayers from the people around me…

"Father…!"

"…"

"Father Lee Ki-Young…!"

I wasn't sure, but…

"I'm sure he'll be victorious. I'm sure of it."

I had to be as positive as possible because my job was to reassure the people here.

"The swordsman of light will surely guide him to the light. He'll guide Father Lee Ki-Young to where he has to go—that's why he's still fighting," I said.

"…"

"Father Lee Ki-Young's home isn't a place filled with nightmares, evil, darkness, and suffering. He has always been guiding us. He has always been guiding fools like us to where we had to go, and he has always been making sure that we're walking on the right path," I added.

"…"

"I believe that he simply lost his way. He simply lost his way while chasing after an ideal that was beyond him," I said.

"Will he come back?"

"Yes, he'll come back. I'm sure of it because…" I trailed off.

"The sun…"

'Yeah, I'm sure it's possible because of the rising red sun… '

“Yes. The light will guide him once again,” I replied.

* * *

“Why are the demons…”

“I’m not sure. I think they want to watch as well because they enjoy testing and ridiculing humans.”

“You mean…”

“They want to watch the fight because they want to show us that they’re stronger than the light we believe in…”

“I don’t like that hobby of theirs…”

I[2] sat on top of the wall and looked out, and I started to feel calm for some reason. The fight that seemed like it was never going to end was in a lull. This battle was obviously beyond us.

If we were to act hastily and try to help, the demons would make a move as well.

Actually, the biggest reason why we weren’t moving was…

‘We can’t move… ’

It was simply because we didn’t have the energy to move anymore.

It wasn’t just us.

I could see the Guild Master of the Red Mercenary Guild trying to catch her breath while leaning against the wall. Park Yeon-Joo of the Black Swan Guild was standing next to her, and her condition wasn’t any different from the latter.

She was staring at the ongoing battle while receiving treatment for her severed leg.

The famous members of the Blue Guild were also gathered in one place and were slumped against the wall as if they couldn’t move anymore.

They were definitely a bunch of powerful people, so it wasn’t that hard to deduce the

condition of the ordinary soldiers if even the powerful named members of the battlefield were extremely exhausted.

More than half of the troops couldn't move anymore, and we had to use this lull to reorganize our troops. I was sure that this was the reason why our leaders had told us to stand by.

The demons had already taken half of the wall, so it was a bit ridiculous that we were putting our hopes into the ongoing battle.

'How amusing.'

The ongoing battle was no different from an arena because we were watching the Swordsman of Light and the Corrupted Saint duke it out from the top of the wall.

'How are they moving like that?'

My frame was pretty large for an adventurer, so I knew better than anyone that they weren't in the condition to move properly. I smiled bitterly because I could see that their condition was worse compared to mine.

It seemed that I wasn't the only one who thought the same because I could hear someone's voice talking about it from far away.

"Are they really humans like us? This is pretty ridiculous. The two of them single-handedly destroyed the city, and now… they're fighting each other…"

"Of course, they're tired. I'm sure that they really want to pass out right now."

"That's true, but…"

"If I were in their shoes, I wouldn't be able to stand properly. I'm in pretty bad condition, even though I used up my mana, so I'm sure that it'll be the same for you if you were in their shoes."

"…"

"Just because they're on another level doesn't mean that they don't get tired. They're just enduring it."

"…"

"It's all because they have a reason not to let everything go. I'm sure they have a better reason compared to a dumbass like me who only cares about his own life. I guess it's the same for Benigoa's Chosen."

"…"

"The selfless act of self-sacrifice is difficult. So how about it? Want to make a bet?"

"I was waiting for you to say that, you gambling addict!"

I turned my head and saw familiar faces.

'You guys are actually alive…?'

I saw the comrades I frequent the pub with. I saw Kennen, a playboy in Lindel, while the other guy was George, a third-rate gambler. I raised my hand to greet them, but it seemed like they didn't notice me.

"You really want to gamble at a time like this?" Kennen asked.

"It's exactly because we're in this situation that we should gamble. It could be the final gamble of my life, but it doesn't mean that I'm going to bet on the losing side, Kennen. I'm betting on the Swordsman of Light," George replied.

"Why?" asked Kennen.

"I'm just a third-rate gambler. What kind of reason would I have to bet?" replied George.

"Stop talking nonsense, George. Everyone here knows that you have bad luck," he said.

"Who knows? Let's watch. I have a feeling that I'm right this time, and…" he paused.

"What?"

"No matter which side I pick, I'm going to win this game, anyway. *Cough*," he answered.

'Bullshit… '

However, his words made me feel less anxious for some reason.

He was an idiot, but George was capable of making comments like that sometimes. If the situation really did end up the way he had predicted, then I would take him to a pub and buy him as much alcohol as he wanted.

I looked back to the ongoing battle while having ridiculous thoughts because I wanted to know if he would win the bet this time. After all, his luck was notoriously bad, but…

"*Haha.*"

For some reason, I had a feeling that he would win this time.

"Man, what a great timing. The entire thing feels staged for some reason."

A blinding red light started to rise, and I couldn't help but smile upon seeing it.

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1. Unknown Priest POV ☜

2. Unknown Person POV ☜

CHAPTER 519
RISING LIGHT (2)

The explosion sounded particularly loud in my ear, and the ground started to split. The debris from the ruins of the city was flying all over the place while I was bouncing around in different directions.

I couldn't breathe properly because of the pressure. To be exact, I didn't have the luxury to catch my breath because I couldn't afford to take my eyes off of the opponent in front of me.

The moment I looked over at him, I saw a deadly attack filled with mana flying toward me from every direction.

Crack! Craaaaaack!

I was getting tired of these noises because it had been a while since the city was destroyed. If I were to exaggerate, the current Lindel looked worse than the Lindel in my past life. The damage was so great that it would be difficult for people to believe that only two people did all this.

The Red Mercenary's Guild House and the city plaza that the adventurers frequented had been destroyed along with everything else. Actually, I couldn't even differentiate which brick belonged to what building anymore.

The wall that the people were protecting with their mana was the only thing that was standing because they had nothing else to protect. They were watching the battle from the top of the wall, and they knew that this battle would decide the fate of everything.

Therefore, it felt like the chaos settled them and became somewhat organized.

However, the cheering people had become quiet.

I was getting bothered by the fact that only two people were making all these noises.

'How long has it been?'

I honestly wasn't keeping track—no, it was more like I couldn't keep track because I was busy. Doom Ki-Young officially entered his final phase, and I couldn't say for sure, but I was confident that the same was true for Kim Hyun-Sung.

He decided to incapacitate me, but he seemed to have gone too far and ended up going berserk because a vast amount of mana was pouring out of him. To be honest, he looked kind of pitiful on the outside, but it was all because he was *that* desperate.

Of course, he was still desperate, and I wasn't in the best condition either, but my condition wasn't as bad as his condition.

'Seriously, this guy… '

Kim Hyun-Sung's condition was extremely bad. I was going to end this at the right time, but the right time hadn't arrived just yet, so we were currently exchanging moves in the calm before the storm. One thing I was relieved about was that he still firmly believed in me. At this point, it would be understandable if he gave up, but his gaze remained firm.

'Geez, I feel really bad.'

At this point, I was sure that even a psychopath would feel his determination. Kim Hyun-Sung kept mumbling that he was going to save me, and he stood up again and again without losing even a tinge of his determination.

He charged at me once more. He was still fast, but his movements weren't that sharp anymore. He swung his sword at me, and Belial's mana reacted by slapping his sword away.

Kim Hyun-Sung was forced backward, and he tried his best to suppress the blood that wanted to come out of his mouth. Honestly, I was exhausted as well. Belial was the one fighting for me, but I was so exhausted that I couldn't help but think if I had ever been this exhausted before.

I wasn't as great as Kim Hyun-Sung, but I wasn't as tired as him. However, it didn't mean that I wasn't tired at all. Anyone's legs would hurt if they were forced to walk for five hours straight, and considering that I had been fighting with all my might all this while…

…I really felt like collapsing to the ground and sleeping right there and then.

Booooooooom!

Kim Hyun-Sung charged, and I blocked him once more. I wasn't sure how many hours it had been since this boring pattern started, but we both had a clear goal, so the fight wouldn't be that complicated.

Our movements were slowing down, so I was sure that the people observing us felt even more desperate. There was a shrill noise as Belial's mana deflected Kim Hyun-Sung's sword once more, but the impact sent me flying away.

I didn't stand up right away because Kim Hyun-Sung flew away as well.

'I don't want to get up.'

It had been quite a while since I got a brief break. I glanced at the wall and saw people watching us from above the wall. Even the members of the Blue Guild couldn't do anything right now while the named adventurers were currently recovering.

However, those whose jobs were related to swordsmanship couldn't take their eyes off of Kim Hyun-Sung. It wasn't really strange because even a swordsmanship layman like me found his swordsmanship amazing, so those people were bound to be more emotional than me upon seeing Kim Hyun-Sung's swordsmanship.

Quite a few people were praying while others were talking to themselves. However, they all had one thing in common—their eyes were fixated on the battle. The fight was so gruesome that I couldn't quite describe it.

It had to be tiring watching a fight for hours on end, but I was sure that they were feeling something.

Someone distracted me…

'Where's Ha-Yan?'

I found Jung Ha-Yan, and it seemed that she really didn't participate in the battle. I knew that she still hadn't recovered, so I was kind of worried about her. Her condition was bad, but she was so quiet that I felt like there was something wrong.

'Yeah, it's best if she doesn't do anything here.'

If possible, I would like to be able to keep moving until the end so that I could teach her a lesson and wrap all these beautifully and properly.

Regardless, the ongoing situation was more important to me than anything else at the moment. I got up slowly, and Kim Hyun-Sung was doing the same.

I saw him continuously staring at me while catching his breath.

"*Pant, pant…"*

He raised his sword once again, and his relaxed expression turned grim. I kept on placing my hand on my mask. Keeping all this up had been extremely exhausting, so I started talking to him so I could rest even for a moment.

"I didn't think you'd fight this hard… Impressive."

"*Pant, pant*…"

"You're the strongest human I've ever seen. I could have never imagined that you're capable of dragging this boring battle out. *Cough! Cough!*" I continued.

"…"

"However, you've already reached your limit. I'm sure of it. I think you can't even stand anymore." I pointed out.

"…"

'Please say something, Hyun-Sung. Let's take a breather.'

"Because I'm not fighting here by myself," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'Damn it, I take that back. Don't say things like that, Hyun-Sung. Please… I'm cringing…'

His line sounded so cringey to me that my face turned red.

The line where I begged him to kill me was pretty cheesy as well, but this was just as

bad as that line. Obviously, he and I were in different situations, and his dialogue was proof of how immersed he was in this play.

I touched my head and acted like I was in pain, so I was sure that he was thinking that Light Ki-Young was still resisting Doom Ki-Young. It was embarrassing, but this was great because our immersion in our roles meant that the audience members were immersed as well.

"Can you stand?" he asked.

"…"

"Since Mr. Ki-Young is still fighting, I can still fight," he continued.

"*Kgh…*"

I was afraid that he would notice my flushed face, so I grabbed my head and lowered it.

"I won't give up either. So please… don't give up, Mr. Ki-Young," he said.

'What a great dialogue… it's touching.'

Unfortunately, it was my responsibility to endure the cringe.

The conversation and break ended when Kim Hyun-Sung started walking toward me once again. I raised my arm slowly, and with a loud *boom*, we got back up again.

We were definitely at our limits.

I wasn't sure how long it had been since I reached my limit. I had depleted my mana long ago, and I was convinced that my arms and legs were broken.

My stamina was depleted even before I could enter Phase Two, so it wouldn't be strange if I ended up dying after all this.

"*Pant, pant.*"

"*Ha…*"

The fire on his started to wane, and Belial's mana was the same. I was sure that Belial still had some mana to lend to me, but I wouldn't be able to handle such an influx of mana with my broken body.

In addition, I was sure that he had already used up his mana. He had also gotten nerfed upon being summoned here, and he even had to summon his high priests on top of that, so unless he was prepared to sacrifice his merits…

'He's at his limit as well.'

The next exchange would finally be the final exchange of moves. If we were to continue fighting, I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung would finally collapse. His magic armor was no longer functioning along with his personal shield, and the mana on his sword was flickering. Even Belial's mana was having a hard time maintaining its original form.

It looked as if the mana's original form was about to shatter into innumerable crystals at any moment—it looked like a candle in the wind.

"*Whoo…*"

Kim Hyun-Sung inhaled and took a stance.

'Yeah. At this point, this is the best thing to do… '

I grabbed my mask and unsheathed Juliena. When I recalled the red light that I had seen in Kim Hyun-Sung's dream, I became sure of it.

'I have to end it here.'

The sunrise was the best background to end this arc, and the sunrise looked more beautiful than any other sunrises I had seen so far. It actually looked like it was cheering for me. The faint light that illuminated the skies also dyed the ruined city in its color.

'It looks nice.'

Kim Hyun-Sung tightened his grip on his sword. He was about to use the gift that he had received from his close friend—who was like a brother to him—to save the Corrupted Saint.

A typical villain had to say something in a situation like this.

“Don’t think I’m the same as that dumb Donovan, you scum.”

Obviously, Kim Hyun-Sung didn’t say anything.

He simply stared at me while holding his sword in a stance.

When he finally moved, I was surprised. It was only then that I gathered my mana.

“Die while brooding over your own ignorance and stupidity,” I added.

“*Whooo.*”

The preparation was long, but it didn’t take long for him to swing his sword. When the sunrise finally covered everything in its light, Kim Hyun-Sung’s sword also emitted light.

The soft red light illuminated the world, blinding me.

‘Wow…!’

I had to resist as much as possible and play along.

“Die! You scum!” I yelled.

The two powerful energies collided, and Lindel was temporarily colored in white. Light and darkness had collided, so I thought the effect would be great, but it was a more beautiful sight than I expected.

Of course, beautiful wasn’t the right word to describe it, and I was sure that the audience members thought the same.

Our swords clashed, and we flew backward at the same time.

Under the influence of the final vestiges of our mana, the ground beneath us caved in, creating a massive circle that sent rocks and debris flying away from us.

Boooooooooooom!!!

"*Aaaah…!*" Kim Hyun-Sung let out a shout that was unlike him. It was a raging cry, and I was sure that he was yelling instinctively because he thought that he wouldn't be able to endure it otherwise.

"*Aaaaaaaahhhhh…!*"

He looked like the perfect hero. Who would speak poorly of him when he was doing his best to drive out the demonic energy in me while being enveloped in light?

It was obvious, but he felt holy to me.

When I looked at him with an evil smile, I saw Kim Hyun-Sung looking straight at me.

There were tears in his eyes as if he was telling me that he couldn't give up.

He bit his lips and poured everything he had to drive the demonic energy away.

'Good job. Let's end it here, Hyun-Sung… '

It was the right thing to do because I would feel bad if I were to make him suffer even more. Something inside of me kept on telling me that the play wasn't perfect just yet, but I thought that everyone would be satisfied with this ending.

Of course, I knew that creators were never satisfied with their own work.

There was a cracking noise as my half-mask fractured, I felt anxious for some reason, and I finally realized why I was anxious.

'T-That crazy bitch…!'

I saw Jung Ha-Yan standing not too far away from where we were, and I was shocked.

'Damn it!'

I was worried that she might interrupt Kim Hyun-Sung, and my worries weren't unfounded because I had seen Jung Ha-Yan attacking a mage who was trying to attack me with a spell back in Rimoura's nest.

I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung, but he was completely focused on driving the demonic energy out of me that he didn't even notice Jung Ha-Yan.

I thought about retrieving my energy to attack Jung Ha-Yan, but I couldn't retrieve something that had already been used.

'He might die… '

Kim Hyun-Sung was at his limit, and if Jung Ha-Yan interrupted him… his mana might shred him into pieces.

"*Huh?*" My thoughts about the worst-case scenario were interrupted by a small lump of fire landing on my head.

"What?! You…" I turned my head and saw a pale Jung Ha-Yan; her hand that was pointing at me was trembling because she had just attacked me with a spell.

"I-I-I'm… sorry. I'm sorry, *heuuuk…!*" Jung Ha-Yan cried.

'D-Damn it.'

"*Heuuuuuuk…* I'm sorry… *heuuuuk…!*" she repeated.

'I'm proud of you, Ha-Yan. I'm really proud. Hell yeah! This is what I'm talking about, damn it! This is the scene that I needed…!'

My happiness caused me to raise my voice.

"You bitch…! How dare you…!"

"Please… wake up… *Hiccup*… Please wake up… *hiccup*…" she begged.

'Hyun-Sung! Now! Do it nooooowwww…! Now! Now!!!'

"*Aaaaaaahhhh!*"

It seemed that Kim Hyun-Sung was aware of the *Do It Now* cliche as well because he finally poured his remaining strength into his sword and…

Crack!

…the mask broke.

When I felt the light enveloping me, I hurriedly activated Job Change to change my job and appearance.

I had truly reached my limit, so I couldn't move anymore, which made me worried about my chances of survival.

The light soon faded, and I was still alive. I turned away from the rising sun to see Kim Hyun-Sung reaching his hand out toward me.

However, all I could do was smile weakly at him.

"Good job. Good… good job. Sniff! You did really well."

Right now, he truly looked like a child.

CHAPTER 520
RISING LIGHT (3)

"You did… really well."

I had no idea what to say in response to Kim Hyun-Sung's words. However, it wasn't because I couldn't think of what to say, it was simply because I was too embarrassed to think of any words to say due to how he was acting like a fifteen-year-old teenager.

I had just awakened as well, so I wasn't really sure about what were the best words I could say. Should I tell him that I could remember everything, or should I tell him that I was suffering from amnesia?

The former path would require me to cry a lot while asking for forgiveness. I was an attention seeker, so I wanted to cry while asking for forgiveness, but I was sure that doing that would ruin this touching moment.

'I'll just have to grovel for forgiveness in three days.'

I figured that it would be better for me to act like I had no idea what was going on right now. I thought it would be better for me to bask in the victorious atmosphere before bawling my eyes out.

I slowly looked up and saw the darkness of the night being vanquished by the sunrise.

Kim Hyun-Sung had already turned his back on the light, but the clear sky caught my attention. It was probably born from the collision between Kim Hyun-Sung and Belial's mana, and it was such a beautiful sight.

The dust of light falling from the sky was glittering, and it felt as if the heavens were congratulating us.

Meanwhile, Kim Hyun-Sung was staring at me with his tear-filled eyes. I could see many different emotions in his eyes as well. I hadn't even said anything just yet, but he was already prickling my conscience.

The way he extended his hand over to me as if he was telling me that everything was over and fine now and that I no longer had to wander in the darkness made me tear up.

When I saw his smile on his bloodied face, I suddenly recalled that I still had no idea what I looked like right now.

Anyway, Kim Hyun-Sung didn't look handsome this time; he actually looked kind of ugly. Half of his face was covered in injuries and blood, and he couldn't open one of his eyes properly.

He was also riddled with injuries from head to toe. Now that I was looking at him up close, I realized that his condition was worse than I thought.

I knew that I wasn't in the best condition, but since I was under Belial's protection, I didn't look that bad on the outside.

However, I felt proud of the fact that he was worried about me more than himself because it basically meant that I was the apple of his eye.

'He needs to get treated as soon as possible… '

"Are you… are you okay?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"I… right now…" I mumbled.

"Do you know who I am?" he questioned.

"Right now… this is…" I mumbled again.

"We should get you examined…" he suggested.

'Take care of yourself first, man.'

"Can you stand up?" he asked.

I nodded slowly, and he grabbed my hand to help me stand up. He examined me to see if I was safe, and he finally heaved a sigh of relief after seeing that I would be fine.

I thought that perhaps this was the time for us to share a friendship hug, but he

seemed bothered about how unclean he was right now. We didn't share a hug, but I felt his emotions through his hand when he helped me stand up.

'I'm really proud. Damn it, this is what I'm talking about.'

Of course, I was proud, especially of his god-like performance today. The Hyun-Sung Coin finally went to the moon, and it made me feel like I had made the right decision investing in the coin.

"O-Oppa, oppa…"

'Our Ha-Yan… You did great, too. Damn it, why does she look so pretty today… '

I knew it was strange to feel that way when it hadn't been that long since she sent a literal fireball crashing to my head. However, I was happy because Jung Ha-Yan had managed to make a crucial and reasonable decision by herself.

Of course, I was honestly worried that she would attack Kim Hyun-Sung earlier, but it seemed that she had made the decision to trust Kim Hyun-Sung. Firing that fireball was a small step in everyone else's eyes, but for her, it was definitely a huge step.

I was convinced that she was still being affected by what she had done because her hands were still trembling. However, it seemed that Ha-Yan was still Ha-Yan because she pushed Kim Hyun-Sung away and hugged me tightly.

"I'm… *heuk!* sorry. It's my fault… *heuk… heuk…"* Jung Ha-Yan cried.

"Ha-Yan, let's…"

"I'm sorry, *heuk…"* she repeated.

"*Ah…"* I grabbed my head to feign injury so that Jung Ha-Yan would let go of me, but Kim Hyun-Sung and Jung Ha-Yan stared at me in worry instead. It seemed that I wouldn't be able to casually grab my head anymore.

Still, their reaction looked pretty funny to me.

Everything was over, but it seemed that things still weren't over in Kim Hyun-Sung's eyes because he sounded worried when he said, "I think we should take you back to the wall right now. Miss Ha-Yan, please move Mr. Ki-Young right away."

"…"

"Why…" I asked.

"I'm sure they'll attack again. This fight isn't over…"

'You can't fight in that condition, man. Don't even try to wander around; just come home with me, man.'

I was getting kind of tired of seeing him stagger while trying his best to raise his sword.

'I understand how you feel, I'm seriously proud of you.'

"Right now, *kgh…*"

"You don't have to think about many things right now, Mr. Ki-Young. Getting out of here is the top priority right now. And your current condition—" Kim Hyun-Sung started.

"No, you're—" I interrupted

"I'm fine." He interrupted me as well.

'He had made up his mind.'

Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he was prepared to die just to send the demons back to Hell. However, if my calculations were right, another fight would probably not happen because I was sure…

…I was sure that Benigoa would finally make her move. I reckoned that she had been waiting for an opportunity to do so all this while, and the Swordsman of Light's victory against the Corrupted Saint made the people's belief in the gods become even more solid than before.

I even thought that perhaps Benigoa didn't have to sacrifice her holy power anymore just to descend here, but it was naturally just an assumption on my end.

Whoosh!

A massive light descended on me and enveloped me.

The heavens seemed to have opened their gates as intense light shone from the skies.

“Benigoa.”

It was a bit funny to see Benigoa trying her best to look as holy as she could when she was bankrupt until recently. If it hadn’t been for me, she wouldn’t have been able to manifest herself here.

Anyway, she definitely stood out because her appearance looked similar to what her statues looked like. She was enveloped in dazzling light along with a vast amount of holy power that I couldn’t quite comprehend, but I could see her clearly.

At the sight, I felt an unknown sense of awe at the dumbass and childish Benigoa.

- This is to Belial and the demons of the 27th Legion.

Her voice sounded elegant. It seemed that she knew how important it was to uphold one’s public image. I nodded when I saw that she had to have made her preparations before manifesting here.

- Return to where you came from. You don’t belong here.

[Looks like it’s time to part ways…]

‘Oh, Belial, thank you very much.’

[I want to stay longer and enjoy the real world, but I can no longer remain here. That dumb bitch must’ve been able to fix the situation somehow since even she is a god as well.]

‘This is very sad. If the system… ’

[It’ll probably think of you as an external advisor, but it seems that you already know that. The system is finally working properly, so I need a reasonable amount of mana as fuel and merits as payment to stay in the real world, and I’m sure that you’ve already noticed that I won’t be able to maintain the 27th Legion and my summons. Weren’t you worried about me backstabbing you?]

'No, no! How could I have such a scummy thought like that? I already know that you can see through this stupid human's heart. I have never had a nauseating thought like that.'

[*Hahaha!* Don't worry, you nauseating human. That's part of your charm. I'm looking forward to seeing you again. I can't wait to work with a nauseating human like you. The Demon Lords are applauding you for today's events They complimented you and said that you're a shitty human…]

[S-Stop saying rude things, Belial!]

[It's been a while, but don't you think you got here too late, incompetent Benigoa? Although I must say that you did well in saving your face just now.]

[F-Father Lee Ki-Young will never work with the demons.]

[I have already planted my seed inside of him. He belongs to me more than you.]

[Your dirty demon! H-How dare you say that about my loyal and lovely Father Lee Ki-Young…!]

What's wrong with them? I understood why Belial was acting that way, but I was surprised by Benigoa's attitude. She had been calling me a piece of trash, but now, she was using flowery words like *loyal* and *lovely* while complimenting me.

'I think she's doing that because she's afraid that Belial might really take me away?'

I wasn't sure about the details, but it seemed that she was worried that Belial might take me away. She was probably thinking of doing her best to keep me by her side. She had manifested in the real world, and I could see her glancing at me.

I couldn't help but smile upon seeing that because she looked like she was trying to read my expression. Of course, I wasn't really sure what was going on, but one thing was for sure. I was in an advantageous position.

I was just one person, but the two of them wanted me for themselves.

'Being a celebrity is painful.'

It was exciting, but this was something I had to think about while having a

conversation.

The system was finally stabilized, and Belial was right; Benigoa could manifest in the real world for a short period of time. As expected, the two started talking using my mind as the proxy, and I could see that they were in a hurry.

[I don't think you have the time to talk about things like this right now, Benigoa.]

[What? How dare you…!]

[Right now, we must discuss other things rather than your lovely priest and the nauseating human that I have my eyes on, you incompetent Benigoa.]

[That's…]

[What can you do for me?]

[What are you talking about? You can't remain long in this world either. I don't understand why you're talking as if you're doing me a favor by going back to where you had come from…]

[I'm telling you that I'm willing to go back in a peaceful way. Aren't you interfering because you don't want the real world to suffer any more damage? And you also want to protect Altanus's will, right? The continent has returned to its original state, but it's still a fact that this is my workplace. I can damage the continent whenever I want, you know better than anyone that I am capable of doing that.]

[Well, I'm sure you don't want to damage your workplace… Anyway, you've done enough, so isn't it time for you to go back?]

[As a member of the 72 Legions, I have honor. If I go back like this without gaining anything after you just told me to go home, my children will lose face. I'll make sure to provide my services so that you'll benefit as well. Let's end our discussion here. You know very well that we don't have much time left. I'll give you ten seconds to think.]

[We never make deals with demons, Belial.]

'I'm sorry to interrupt your conversation, but could I suggest something?'

[…]

[…]

[Let’s hear it, Advisor.]

[My lovely and precious priest, L-Lee Ki-Young…! Of course, I’ll hear it since it’s your suggestion!]

CHAPTER 521
RISING LIGHT (4)

'Everything is returning to normal, Benigoa. I understand your virtuous heart of not wanting to negotiate with Belial, but sometimes, it's better to give up on your beliefs.'

[…]

[…]

'If Belial squeezes into the continent's rift once again and opens it, then the demon that will emerge through that rift won't be like him. I know very well that you don't want something like that to happen, Benigoa. You have just recently recovered your holy power. I think you had to use a lot of holy power to descend like this, and if you try to fix everything that happened here, you'll end up in the same situation before all this. There's also no guarantee that the hard-liner demons won't appear to take advantage of the chaos… '

[M-My lovely priest… but…]

'Belial is also with his legion. I honestly tried to wrap this up nicely, but your descent has—'

[Did I make a mistake? My precious Father Lee Ki-Young?]

'Of course not. However, I want to tell you that Belial's position changed because you showed up in the real world. If the demons disappear after being pushed back by the light, then he won't be able to save face in front of the legion. They'll just say that he ran away from you.'

[The disgusting human is right, you stupid Benigoa. It isn't just my children in the legion. I'd like you to consider how much merit the demons have to pay to watch over this continent. Aside from a few demons, everyone in the 72 Legions is watching the current situation. It won't be honorable for me if I leave just like this.]

This connection wasn't bad, and it was great for them to talk like this.

'I'm just a lowly mortal, so I don't know what's going on up there, but I'm sure they're watching the current situation as well. If you make the situation worse just to protect your belief, I'm sure the ones who are watching will rebuke you, Benigoa.'

[T-Then what do you want?]

[What I want is to step foot on this continent again later.]

[What? Do you really think that I'll allow that? That's impossible!]

[I won't compromise anymore, incompetent Benigoa.]

[As expected, it's impossible to have a reasonable conversation with demons. Do you really think that I don't have any idea about your dirty intentions?!]

'Benigoa, it's not a bad deal.'

[What? Father Lee Ki-Young! Are you being serious?]

'The 27th Legion currently has a close relationship with the other legions, and demons are bound to get summoned here no matter how hard you try to stop them. If Belial manages to step foot here once more, then you'll be more at ease if he decides to move within the territory under your control.'

[That's…]

'You can adjust the contract details. I'm talking about how much power he can bring to the real world, the approximate time and size of the damage he can inflict, and if he can even bring the 27th Legion with him. Knowing ahead of time and preparing for their descent is completely different from not knowing what's going to happen. I'm sure Belial won't make unreasonable plans. If you consider the possibility that the humans of this continent may forget the 27th Legion after you pushed them away, I believe it's reasonable for him to make that kind of suggestion.'

[But…]

'This is your chance, Benigoa. Especially when you just got back your holy power. Do you want to live as a runaway again? You have to use this opportunity to fill your holy power up to the brim.'

[…]

‘Imagine showing your great miracle right now and showing the priests how you drove away Belial. Not only will you recover the holy power you must have consumed to descend, but your status will skyrocket as well. You’re in a slightly unstable state right now. If you make a mistake, it won’t take long for you to fall again. Use this opportunity to make a comeback.’

[The disgusting human is right. You used your holy power to descend, you have to gain something from this as well. This sounds ironic, but I cherish the people living on this continent as well. I don’t want to cause any more damage, however…]

‘If you return with nothing, I’m sure you’ll end up fighting the hard-liner demons.’

[I’m sure I don’t have to mention the fact that my authority will decrease. If that happens…]

‘The hard-liner demons will probably start gathering on this continent. If that happens, I’m not sure if I can even handle them, Benigoa.’

[You know this as well, Benigoa. I’m the most reasonable out of every Demon Lord. You know very well that I don’t want demons like that crazy bitch Lilith and the piece of shit Mammon to come here.]

‘There are very few reasonable demons like Belial. Really… ’

[But… B-But…]

‘I’ll be the notary… Let’s write the contract.’

[W-What?!]

‘That’s the right thing to do, Benigoa.’

[*Hm*, that’s not a bad idea. I don’t think a contract is necessary, but I’m sure creating one will put you at ease.]

‘Of course, you’ll have to compromise many things when writing the details of the contract.’

I had never heard of a demon making a contract with a goddess. However, I figured that Belial probably didn't care about the details as long as he could establish a contract with a goddess. Of course, I was sure he wanted to reap as much profit as he could, but he knew that Benigoa would rip the contract up if he got too greedy.

Unfortunately, Benigoa still looked like she was suspicious about everything.

To be honest, this wasn't a bad deal for her either.

Belial was a demon who strived to satisfy his customers, and I was sure that he would do his best to cooperate with the miracles Benigoa would perform in the future. I thought that she stood more to gain by staging a great miracle and being worshiped by mankind rather than arguing with Belial and possibly becoming bankrupt once again.

[If we're going to write a contract, I'd like to add another condition. It's also for the sake of my safety, but I know it's connected to your merit, so think of it as a free gift, Belial.]

[If it's reasonable, I'll add it in.]

[I-In that case, I don't want you to bother my lovely priest anymore…]

[Impossible. Your *free gift* is basically telling me to give up everything I have. You're more cunning than I thought.]

[If you write in the contract to not bother my priest anymore, I'll make arrangements so that you'll be able to make five waves on the continent within the next two thousand years Additionally, I want you to retrieve the Dark Plaguelord job that you gave him. I think those conditions are to your satisfaction. Am I right, Belial?]

[That's a bunch of bullshit, you cunning bitch! I thought you were just incompetent, but you're eviler than I thought.]

[Then, forget about the contract.]

[All right, incompetent Benigoa, I'll make sure you become bankrupt once again.]

[My lovely priest will fight beside me.]

[That disgusting human will be with me, not with you.]

[My lovely Father Lee Ki-Young. You'll be with me, right? Right? I'll do better in the future… I really will… So come with me, and let's get rid of the demons together.]

[Disgusting human. I believe you know better than anyone what your true identity is. Let's show the dirty bitches up there what it's like to defy those who refuse to talk to you.]

What was wrong with them? Please stop. I had to stop the sudden argument, and I couldn't help but bite my lips because I really didn't expect them to argue.

I thought I could finally rest since the arc was over, but to do that, I had to prevent them from fighting each other no matter what. The continent was on its limit, and if another fight were to break out, mankind and even Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't be able to recover and return to their peak condition, so I was really worried that they would fight.

'T-Then how about this? You both seem very interested in my position at the end of my lifespan… '

[I can wait for two thousand years. I don't know about her, but it seems that she wants you as well… She's probably thinking that she can purify your disgusting soul, but that's just ridiculous.]

Belial was right, but it seemed that Benigoa was prepared to do anything as long as Belial wouldn't be able to take me for himself. Unfortunately, I couldn't really quite believe that the heavens actually wanted me.

She was probably thinking that it would be better for her to take me rather than let the enemies take me away. She could have also gotten a hint from someone else, but I didn't really have the time to speculate right now.

I had to resolve this argument as smoothly as I could. I had an idea, but I wasn't really sure if they would be satisfied with it.

'I'm thinking about giving you priority recruitment, Benigoa.'

[…]

[…]

[That's not a bad idea…]

[P-Priority recruitment?]

'Yes, a chance for priority recruitment.'

[I-It's not like you're leaving me, right? My lovely—]

'Of course, I want to be with you, but I have to be more cautious about making a decision since I would have to stay on whatever side I'll end up picking forever. I also need to consider the conditions… There are many things I have to consider. Don't worry, Benigoa. As long as you offer the right conditions, I'll think positively about your offer. Therefore, I'm giving you priority recruitment for this negotiation. You should also discuss my suggestion with those above instead of making the decision by yourself.'

[Y-You're definitely quick-witted, Father Lee Ki-Young.]

'I thought someone gave you a hint. Anyway… are we proceeding with the contract?'

[It doesn't sound bad…]

'Yes.'

[I'd like to think about it for a moment…]

'I understand.'

It wasn't really strange that the idea of signing a contract with a demon was a difficult pill to swallow for Benigoa. She probably had many things to consider as well, and I figured that she would also have to let go of some of her beliefs to proceed with the contract.

Signing the contract honestly wasn't a big deal in my eyes, but it was definitely a big deal for her.

I suddenly found myself staring at Belial holding up the contract. Benigoa also sat down in front of the table while crying, and she was looking at me as if she was asking for confirmation that signing the contract was truly the right thing to do.

I looked around and confirmed that they were truly transcendent beings. I didn't even notice when they pulled me somewhere else, but my awe turned into something strange when I saw Benigoa's crying face.

She didn't look like a transcendent being at all. She kept on glancing at me as if she were about to sign a slave contract.

'Trust me, Benigoa. We overcame the bankruptcy crisis together. You'll definitely profit by signing that contract.'

[We're running out of time. Hurry up and make your decision.]

[Father Lee Ki-Younggggg… *Hiccup*.]

'Sign it.'

[I'll take it back if you don't want to.]

'If you don't sign it today, you won't get another chance.'

[The disgusting human is right.]

'Sign it.'

[*Hiccup… hiccup…!*]

Benigoa's hand was trembling, and I ended up doing something that I thought was a bit rude to do to a transcendent being.

I grabbed her hand quietly, and I could feel her calming down.

'Trust me and sign it.'

[Looks like you don't want to sign the contract…]

'She just needs time to compose herself. Please wait a moment.'

[*Hiccup…]*

'Hurry!'

[The contract…]

‘Sign it, Benigoa!’

[I… I don’t… I don’t think I can…]

‘Don’t be so weak. Hurry up and sign it!’

[*Kgh…]*

‘On the count of three, I want you to sign it. One… ’

[Two.]

‘Three!’

Benigoa finally placed her trembling hand on the contract, and a bright light instantly pervaded the space in front of me.

CHAPTER 522
RISING LIGHT (5)

"Are you awake?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"*Ugh…*"

"Mr. Ki-Young, can you hear me?" he asked.

"*Ah…*"

I opened my eyes and saw people looking at me. After being sucked away somewhere, I had to have momentarily lost consciousness. When I heard Kim Hyun-Sung's voice, I became convinced that he dismissed the ridiculous thought of fighting the demons on his own, which meant that…

'The contract was signed.'

Otherwise, he wouldn't be standing with the guild members.

I looked around again, seemingly confused. I started seeing faces that I hadn't seen for quite a while. They were on top of the wall where the fierce battle had taken place.

As expected, I heard Park Deok-Gu's voice.

"Hyung-nim, are you okay? Are you really okay?"

"…"

"Hyung-nim, can you hear me? Say something, bro! Does he know who I am?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine, Deok-Gu. So… right now… I…" I mumbled.

"Hey, don't think about anything. They said that your mind has to stabilize. Hey, Miss

Elena! Hyung-nim is awake. He's… awake! Hurry up and come here! Check his condition! Hurry!" he shouted.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young!" Elena called out.

I definitely heard Park Deok-Gu calling for Elena, but the person who came rushing toward me was Sun Hee-Young.

'What's wrong with her? She usually doesn't act this way.'

Of course, she would express her emotions, but she had never been this open about it.

If my memories were serving me correctly, then she was the type of person who would observe the situation from behind everyone else, so I didn't expect that she would push the guild members away just to hug me.

I was sure that she was worried about me, but I was dumbfounded by her cries.

Sun Hee-Young was crying like she was at a funeral, and the way her shoulders trembled as she buried her face into my chest made her look pitiful. She looked so sad that I felt a bit ashamed.

Her face was covered in snot and tears, and she looked so weary, as if she had been carrying all the burdens of this world.

"*Heuuuuuuuung…!*"

"…"

"*Heuuuuuuuung…!*"

Yoo Ah-Young, Lee Chang-Ryeol, Ahn Ki-Mo, and Kim Ye-Ri weren't any different. I started to feel proud when I saw my friend Jo Hye-Jin, Park Deok-Gu's girl—Hwang Jung-Yeon—Kasugano Yuno, and Elena.

Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung, Jung Ha-Yan, and Park Deok-Gu were here as well.

Jung Ha-Yan still looked anxious, while Park Deok-Gu was crying so much that his eyes had become swollen. However, their lips were curled up ever so slightly as they

wept.

The situation wasn't over just yet, but they were definitely relieved that they managed to rescue their precious sub guild master. I could see them starting to relax as well.

"It's a relief, a relief… Oh god, thank you. Oh god…"

"…"

"Hyung-nim, are you okay? Hee-Young noonim, Is hyung-nim…" Park Deok-Gu paused.

"H-He seems… fine physically, and his head is fine as well. He'll probably experience short-term memory loss, but if he rests up, I'm sure he'll recover in no time," Sun Hee-Young replied.

"What do you think, Miss Elena…" she asked.

"Thankfully, I don't feel any demonic energy, but I need to watch over him a bit more… to give a more accurate diagnosis," Elena answered.

"What do you mean, short-term memory loss? Right now, aren't we…" I paused.

"…"

It was a bit funny to see them looking at each other in astonishment upon hearing the confusion in my voice. They looked like they had no idea how to explain the situation, and I probably would have reacted the same way if I were in their shoes.

'Ah… you see, you became corrupted, and you ended up ruining Lindel. We've never seen a demon as strong as you. Can you see the wounds on the guild master? You did all that, so you should be proud of yourself.'

They couldn't possibly say that to me.

The guild members displayed a variety of expressions in the proverbial blink of an eye. A few of them were staring at each other while the others avoided my gaze.

Park Deok-Gu and Kim Hyun-Sung even walked away to talk to each other.

“What should we do? We should probably tell him…” Park Deok-Gu suggested.

“He won’t be able to accept it that easily…” Kim Hyun-Sung pointed out.

“He’ll find out eventually. It’s better to get the worst out of the way first, and then we can tell him what happened. Based on his personality, I think he’s going to do something drastic if we don’t talk to him about it in the right order,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“But…”

‘I can hear everything, Deok-Gu.’

It was a bit difficult for me to pretend to be groggy and hard of hearing.

“We also need to think about what we’re going to do afterward. I’m sure this won’t happen, but the Sacred Democratic Country and the other guilds might try to bring him down. If that happens…” Park Deok-Gu paused.

“I won’t let that happen, so no need to worry,” Kim Hyun-Sung reassured him.

“What should we do if the worst imaginable situation comes true?” he asked.

“We will have to leave the Sacred Democratic Country,” he replied.

There was an extremely low chance of that happening.

Saying that Father Basel would want to kill me was no more convincing than saying that Kim Ye-Ri didn’t like acting. I even had Benigoa’s support, so I would probably be known as a hero rather than as a public enemy,

It was cute that they were imagining various scenarios, while the two were having their conversation, the other guild members tried to buy time by talking about useless things to me. I couldn’t help but think that I really killed it this time when I saw that they were afraid of telling me the truth.

Soon, Park Deok-Gu and Kim Hyun-Sung returned after their small meeting. They had to have decided to put all the responsibility on Kim Hyun-Sung for now because I saw everyone looking at him.

The atmosphere became tense, and Kim Hyun-Sung started talking, “I understand that you’re confused right now, Mr. Ki-Young. However, your recovery is the top priority right now. I’ll explain everything afterward, so…”

“But…”

“Please listen to my suggestion this time,” he requested.

“Okay,” I said.

He seemed worried about my mind, but my mind wasn’t as weak as he thought. He made a decent choice by avoiding the topic for now, but I was sure that he would simply suffer under the weight of hiding the truth from me.

Therefore, I was convinced that recovering my memories as soon as possible would be the best course of action for the sake of our lovely regressor’s mental health.

I nodded slowly while smiling, and their faces brightened up, seemingly relieved.

Of course, the battle behind them wasn’t a relieving sight at all.

“Now that I think about it, Benigoa…” I mentioned.

“I’ll also tell you that later,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“Okay…”

They definitely had to explain to me what was going on. I could see two monsters fighting each other not too far away from us. In other words, it would have been strange if Kim Hyun-Sung had told me not to worry about it.

- The light will burn you!

- Do it if you can, you dirty bitch of light!

Belial manifested in his giant form, and Benigoa stood in front of him. The colorful light and the ink-like demonic energy that no one could see clashed. During the battle, our Benigoa was dividing her power to protect the injured humans, and I heard people everywhere praying and thanking Benigoa.

She was struggling while crying out for the injured creatures of the continent, and the sight made her look incredibly holy and noble.

And what about Belial? He looked even more frightening than the time he appeared in Laios, and the way he swung his large sword was enough to instill fear in anyone's heart, regardless of their strength.

'Wow… they're just… '

A third party who wasn't aware of what happened behind the scenes would definitely be convinced that this was a real fight with two sides fighting with all their might.

'People will definitely think that this is a real fight. Seriously. Wow… they're both trash.'.

Belial kept on talking about how he would destroy the continent, but he was also doing his best to satisfy the customers. Meanwhile, Benigoa was also doing her best while crying, and it wasn't like she had any choice.

After all, she ended up signing the contract.

However, the scene was so ridiculous that my jaw dropped.

Thanks to the prayers from all over the continent and the fear that was instilled in everyone's heart at the sight of Belial's giant form, the two transcendent beings were definitely accumulating a ton of merit as they fought.

Unfortunately, their fight didn't last that long because Belial ultimately had to return to Hell, while Benigoa could no longer stay here.

Soon, Benigoa took advantage of a gap to throw a holy spear into Belial's heart.

- H-How could I… fall to you…!

- Return, Belial. I will no longer stand by and let your kind control the continent.

- Remember this, you dirty bitch of light and the creatures following her! I will return! Do not even think that you've won today! Today's victory does not belong to you.

- I will protect this continent.

- Remember this, you pesky humans…! I'm your darkness, fear, and your nightmare…

'Belial's acting is on a different level, seriously. Wow… How does he keep a straight face while saying such a cringey line?'

[I appreciate your thoughts about me.]

'Belial.'

[I know we said goodbye earlier, but it's really time for me to go. Many demons here are sad that they couldn't say goodbye to you. Anyway, I'll make sure we can reach out to you in some other way.]

'Do as you please.'

[It was fun, you disgusting human. No, our External Advisor of the 27th Legion. I'll wait for the day we meet again.]

'I'll be waiting as well.'

[Hurry up and leave, Belial.]

[Aren't you being too harsh, Benigoa? We're partners now.]

[As if!]

[Whatever, that's your opinion, but what happened just now won't change. It was fun, Benigoa.]

[Don't come back.]

The darkness disappeared, and the mysterious monsters returned to where they came from along with the remaining demons. The light was shining brightly once, and it seemed that Benigoa had truly run out of time because she couldn't be seen anymore.

- You people are strong. Don't give up, and don't falter. Your pain today will become your strength and asset someday. Your pain and sacrifices today will make you even

stronger.

Those were the words she left in her wake.

It was finally over.

The people hugged each other and cheered as they basked in the light of victory. Some of them rubbed their eyes as if they couldn't believe what they just saw, while others collapsed with dejected smiles. I wanted to smile as well, but I had to act like I was suffering from a so-called short-term memory loss, so I stared at everyone with wide eyes.

I started thinking about how I should act from now on. Should I recover my memories and apologize right away while crying?

'This is… Lindel…? I… did this?'

I couldn't help but smile inwardly when I imagined myself saying such a scummy line while crying. I had many plans I wanted to execute, but I really wanted to sleep right now because I was too exhausted.

"Hyung-nim, hyung-nim! Hey… wake up!" Park Deok-Gu yelled.

"Mr. Ki-Young… are you okay…" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"Oppa… *Kgh…* Oppa…!" Jung Ha-Yan cried.

"…"

Their voices sounded faint.

When I opened my eyes once more, I found myself in a room with no windows.

CHAPTER 523
HALF IMPRISONMENT (1)

'…'

'Where am I?'

I saw an unfamiliar room upon waking up. The luxurious interior reminded me of my previous room, but for some reason, I wasn't happy. To be exact, the room was almost the same as my previous room. The alchemist kit I often used was sitting in one corner, and the classic and antique furniture was there as well.

It was the same for my luxurious collection, which was displayed on one side of the room. The Chanel Hermes was there, and there were interesting-looking luxury items.

I didn't know where they came from, but it was highly likely that Kim Hyun-Sung brought them here. No, I was sure that he brought them here when I saw that the displayed items were mostly bags.

He definitely thought that I liked bags because I was happy when he gifted me the infinity bag.

Obviously, my interest in the luxury items didn't last that long because the room itself caught my attention. It was larger than my previous room.

'What the… '

It seemed as if they had forcefully expanded the room because they were worried that I might feel suffocated being inside a small room. If I were to exaggerate a bit, it was so big that I could run around in it.

The potted plants also reminded me of a small garden.

There was a chessboard on top of a large desk, and the chessboard looked as if an artisan had made it by hand the bookshelf attached to the wall was filled with books

worth reading. It looked as if they had placed all this here so that I wouldn't get bored, and I couldn't help but feel anxious upon realizing it.

"What's this?"

I got up slowly. My legs were unsteady, so I almost fell, but fortunately, my body still knew how to walk. I looked around while walking toward the door, and I reached out to the doorknob upon arriving in front of it.

Rattle, rattle.

"What's going on?"

Rattle, rattle, rattle.

The door wouldn't open, and I suddenly felt this sense of incongruity.

'Where are the windows?'

I wanted to know what was going on outside, but there wasn't a single window in this large room. If I were in a small room, I probably wouldn't feel this sense of incongruity.

The room was huge, and unless the designer was out of his mind or was up for an extreme challenge, there was no way that they would design a room like this. I wasn't sure of this, but I cautiously came up with one answer.

'Damn it, am I in prison?'

I suddenly recalled my time at the Cursed Shrine with Jung Ha-Yan. However, I shook my head when I recalled Jung Ha-Yan's figure that day. There was no way she would kidnap me and cause more trouble.

Naturally, I was just assuming things here, so I wanted someone to come here and explain what was going on to me. Dealing with the aftermath was more important than the result and the progression of the incident, so I naturally had many things to do.

I still had to apologize to the entire nation while crying, and there were some places I had to visit. I could already feel a headache coming when I thought about how

difficult it would be to take care of the Federation, not to mention restore it.

The entire region could already be considered ownerless land, so it was important for us to make a decision about it. I also had to take care of public opinion as well as the continental joint training that was definitely gaining momentum right now.

'I also need to reorganize things.'

I could ask Lee Ji-Hye to do it, but I couldn't let her handle all of those issues. All of mankind had to unite to overcome the pain and recover, but Lindel's three major guilds were at the center of everything.

I felt like sleeping due to the headache, but I couldn't do that. I started tapping the bed with my finger as I thought about many things. Soon, the door was opened slowly. I looked in the direction of the noise and was surprised to see Sun Hee-Young.

Crash.

It seemed that she was surprised as well because she inadvertently dropped the flower pot that she was holding. It seemed that the small garden in one corner of the room had a manager. I wasn't sure how I should react, so I smiled.

"M-Mr. Lee Ki-Young…" Sun Hee-Young stuttered.

I saw her running towards me with a surprised face. The tears that filled her eyes were rolling down her face, and she hugged me tightly. She reacted like someone who was hugging her lover who had just recovered from a vegetative state. I wasn't sure of this, but she was probably the one who had been taking care of me all this time.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Mr. Lee Ki-Young," she repeated.

"Yes, I'm right here," I said.

"*Heuk…* Mr. Lee Ki-Young," she called out again.

"Yes, Miss Hee-Young. By the way… I can't breathe…" I mumbled.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Mr. Lee Ki-Young…!" she exclaimed.

She was still hugging me. I wasn't annoyed or anything, but I really was having a hard time breathing. I tapped her shoulder, and her face turned red.

"*Ah! Ah!* I'm sorry…" she apologized.

"No, you don't have to apologize, Miss Hee-Young. By the way, where am I…" I looked around.

"I'm sure you have many questions. I'll contact the guild master right away. The others have been waiting for you to wake up. I'm glad. I'm really glad. *Heuk*…!" she said.

"…"

"Will you be fine if I check your condition first? Since you just woke up…" she trailed off.

"Yes, of course," I answered.

I nodded slowly, and she examined me while crying.

I could feel her hand groping around in places that didn't have to be checked, but it seemed that she was examining me properly based on her serious face. I was sure that I was fine, but I was even more relieved when I saw her examining me.

'The physical exam is over.'

This examination couldn't be more definitive. I arranged my clothes and looked at Sun Hee-Young again.

"I couldn't find anything particularly wrong with you. You're in great condition. I've been monitoring your condition, but I'm really glad that you're okay, even though you're already awake," she said with a sigh.

"Right. By the way, Miss Hee-Young—" I started.

"Before that, aren't you hungry? Drink some water first, and I'll have them serve you porridge for now. It's been a while since you've eaten, so it's best to eat food that isn't too heavy so your stomach can digest it. You can drink a potion as well," she suggested.

"…"

'I feel like she's changing the subject.'

I tried to ask her again, but she would change the subject frantically. She was probably doing that because she knew what I wanted to ask her. It was obviously strange seeing her forcefully avoiding my questions, and it was even more obvious that she didn't want to answer because she had never really been that great of an actor.

'So you don't want to tell me, huh?'

The one who brought me to this room wasn't Sun Hee-Young or Jung Ha-Yan. To be exact, I was sure that they were part of it, but it was probably the entire Blue Guild, including *him*.

'Kim Hyun-Sung, you bastard—'

My train of thought was interrupted by the faces I hadn't seen in quite a while. I wasn't sure what they had been doing before receiving the news just now, but they were armed, including Jung Ha-Yan and Park Deok-Gu.

They cried and ran toward me. Jung Ha-Yan was especially touched because her face was covered in tears and snot, but I could see that she had grown more mature than before.

"You're awake," Jo Hye-Jin said.

"It's been a while, Miss Hye-Jin," I greeted.

"It's been a really long time, Sub Guild Master," Ahn Ki-Mo greeted.

"It's nice to see you again, Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo," I said.

"Sub Guild Master…"

'Yoo Ah-Young, Lee Chang-Ryeol, and the rookies… '

I saw Han Sora as well. Since Elena wasn't here, she had definitely gone on a business trip to take care of the elves' issues. I patted Jung Ha-Yan's head, who was hugging

one of my arms, and I saw new unfamiliar faces when I looked around.

'Who are they… '

They were wearing the guild's badge on their chests.

'Who are they? Did they hire new guild staffers?'

However, their stats were telling me that they weren't ordinary guild staffers.

'Did they recruit new party members?'

I looked at the unfamiliar group in confusion. Kim Hyun-Sung grabbed my weak hand with an emotional look. I felt like I had seen him just a few days ago, but he was acting as if we hadn't seen each other in ten months.

He was crying this time, too.

'Stop crying, man.'

"You're awake."

"Yes. Where—I mean, Mr. Hyun-Sung. Can you… tell me what happened?" I asked.

"You don't have to be worried about it, and the issue has been resolved," Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

"I see…" I said.

"The demons appeared, and the Continental Union fought them. We managed to save you, and Benigoa appeared…"

'I know that's not all… '

"…That's how we won. W-We managed to save you with the help of these people," he stuttered.

At last, I finally realized why he decided to put me in this room. Everyone was in on this show. They were busy nodding at Kim Hyun-Sung's ridiculously short story, and I could see that they were trying to prank me as if I were a fool.

I easily saw through what they wanted to do and what they were thinking. They were trying to limit my exposure to the outside world to control my recovery. They were probably thinking that I would get confused if I were to recover my memory too fast.

I wasn't sure when they were going to reveal everything, but they probably thought that it was too early for any reveals.

'Should I just tell them that I remember everything?'

It could be a better choice than dragging this on. I knew that they were going to act cautious, but they were being more cautious than I expected.

It was ridiculous how they were reacting to Kim Hyun-Sung's every word.

Kim Ye-Ri, Ahn Ki-Mo, and Hwang Jung-Yeon were acting pretty well, but Kim Hyun-Sung, the director of this play, made things awkward by saying his lines as if he were reading them from a book.

"It has been quite a while since then, but pitch-black mana is still floating around outside," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'Stop lying, you bastard. There's no dark mana floating around… '

"According to the experts, the mana could have a fatal effect on you," he continued.

'The setting is really bad.'

"So… I think it's best if you remain here for the time being," he suggested.

Kim Hyun-Sung was trying to create a believable story to shove me in here. Soon, he was done talking. I felt kind of anxious about what he was trying to do, but I thought that it wouldn't last that long.

'There's no way they'll lock me up in here, right? If I want to get some fresh air, I'm sure they'll let me go outside. What's the big deal?'

And just like that, two weeks passed by in a flash…

Damn it…

CHAPTER 524
HALF IMPRISONMENT (2)

Honestly, the past two weeks hadn't been that painful for me. It wasn't like someone cut my hair without my consent, and it wasn't like I was eating fried dumplings for all three meals of the day. The quality of the food was high, and I was living a comfortable life in the room. I was being treated properly, and I was living a really luxurious life.

I was undeniably happy because I didn't even have to lift a finger. I didn't need to do anything or move. If I got hungry, I could just order food. If I needed something, I just had to ask someone to give it to me.

I hadn't tried this yet, but Sun Hee-Young, Elena, and Jung Ha-Yan were taking turns feeding me, so I was sure that they would send someone to feed me if I just asked them for it.

It was kind of suffocating, but it was undoubtedly fun. Who would not like spending time in a bed doing nothing? I didn't particularly dislike lying down lazily and spending my time reading a book, but there was a certain frustration in me that couldn't be relieved.

My room was big, but my actions were limited, so I felt really uncomfortable.

There was also a significant difference between staying here by my own free will and being forced to stay here.

During the first week, I thought that it would be best for me to follow their suggestion, so I didn't say anything in protest. However, I was starting to feel uncomfortable being stuck in this room.

I played chess with Jo Hye-Jin! Ate food! Went to a sauna! Went swimming![1] I did all those and more activities, but it was kind of hard to stay in the same place for an extended period of time.

I was doing my best to endure the frustration, but the issue was that I had no idea

just how long I would have to stay here. It was fine for me to take a break for a few weeks, but I couldn't help but feel anxious based on how the situation was flowing.

'Damn it… '

I wasn't sure if they got traumatized by how I got kidnapped by the demons after wandering around, but my environment was changing.

I had no idea what was going on outside because I was stuck in this room, but I felt nervous when I recalled everyone's expression. My bodyguards stuck out to me the most. Yes, bodyguards. They gave me bodyguards.

'Bodyguards, my ass!'

Right now, they were quietly standing in front of the door outside, and those bastards wearing the Blue Guild's emblem on their chests were called Lee Ki-Young Guards. I obviously didn't recruit then, and I never gave them that name.

Kim Hyun-Sung had recruited them arbitrarily, and the guild members definitely agreed as well. The leaders of the Lee Ki-Young Guards were two male and two female high-rank adventurers, and each leader had fifteen subordinates beneath them.

I hadn't seen every member of the Lee Ki-Young Guards just yet, but even the subordinates of the leaders were skilled enough to be considered high-rank adventurers themselves.

I had no idea when Kim Hyun-Sung recruited them. Anyway, Lee Ki-Young Guards consisted of four leaders and sixty members.

If I were to consider the dedicated guild staffers assisting these bodyguards, then Lee Ki-Young's Guards would be the biggest faction in the guild.

I was frustrated because these high-rank adventurers could easily bring an unimaginable amount of money for the Blue Guild by entering dungeons, but they were wasting their time here as bodyguards while Kim Hyun-Sung was paying them a huge salary.

I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung felt proud of what he had done, but in my eyes, he was wasting manpower.

'Isn't this a bit too much?'

At this point, I had to think deeply about whether what they were doing was even reasonable or not. Who could have known that the guild would pull out the imprisonment protection card and give me a group of bodyguards? I got up and tried to open the door out of curiosity, but all I heard was a rattling sound.

Soon, the door opened from the other side.

'Why aren't they sleeping?'

I saw the leader of Lee Ki-Young Guards' group two. She had a swordsman-type job, but she was wielding dual daggers. She also looked to be the same age as Kim Ye-Ri.

She wasn't as skilled as Kim Hyun-Sung, but she had high Agility and was a balanced adventurer overall. If my memories were serving me correctly, then her name was…

'Park Lian.'

She had a long scar on one side of her face, but she was still beautiful. Her overall demeanor was cold, but her stats were comparable to Kim Ye-Ri's stats. She was young, but she possessed an intimidating aura.

Her voice actually made me cower slightly, and her demeanor made her look like someone who was destined to rule over others. I wasn't sure about the other details about her, but I was sure that she had been working with Kim Hyun-Sung in the latter's past life, and that was most likely the reason he decided to recruit her.

"What's wrong, Sub Guild Master?" Lian asked.

"Well, you see… Miss Lian," I hesitated.

"You can talk comfortably, Sub Guild Master. As we've mentioned before, we're your hands and feet. We're ready to accept any order you have for us," she said.

'Then, free me from this place, please.'

"Well, I feel like I'm suffocating here, so I'd like to go outside…" I requested.

"…"

“I just want to walk around the place for a bit. You’ll be with me, so I don’t think there will be any issues,” I added.

“…”

“…”

“The guild master is currently away. I’ll contact him as soon as possible to schedule your night stroll. I’d appreciate it if you could wait just a bit,” she requested.

Seriously? A night stroll had to be scheduled? I had heard her say that a few times before, but I couldn’t help but laugh when I heard it again.

“How about Lindel… instead of a night stroll…” I asked.

“Lindel is still a forbidden area for most people. Miss Jung Ha-Yan and a few mages had been dispatched to restore the Federation. The guild master also said that you won’t be able to endure the mana in the air outside, considering your current condition.”

“I think I’ve gotten healthier…” I remarked.

“Miss Elena and Miss Sun Hee-Young also suggested that you stay here. They’re making a lot of progress, so if you rest a bit more, I’m sure you’ll be able to move around freely soon. Please don’t think about anything else and focus on recovering,” she added.

“What I’m trying to say is—”

“I’m sorry, Sub Guild Master. I’d be happy to accept other requests, but…” she trailed off.

“…”

“The guild master also said the same thing. He said that we should follow your orders even if the order was to attack him. However, if it’s something that might harm you, then we have to ignore your orders,” she continued.

‘I’ve already recovered. I’m healthy… ’

“I’m not sure if this will make you feel better, but I have just received a message that the guild master will be arriving soon. I’ll make preparations so that you can go on a stroll, so please give me a moment,” she informed me.

‘A stroll, my ass! Shit… ’

She didn’t fall for my request.

I felt like an idiot for thinking that she would fall for it as long as I started whining.

“I understand that it’s difficult for you, Sub Guild Master. However, the guild master is doing all of this to protect you, so I hope you’ll keep that in mind,” she said.

‘The problem is that he’s being overprotective… ’

I understood the situation, but I couldn’t understand everything that he was trying to do. I understood Kim Hyun-Sung’s thoughts. He was determined to protect me from information and outside threats, and he was also scared that I would get hurt. However, I couldn’t have imagined that he would take it this far.

I thought that he was traumatized when I begged him to kill me.

Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung was looking more relaxed right now. I wasn’t sure if he had actually put down all the weight that he had been carrying, but one thing I was sure of was that he looked more relaxed than before.

He had changed drastically compared to the time we spent in the world of his consciousness, where he was crying out to stop putting all the responsibility on him.

Unfortunately, every treatment method would always have a side effect, so…

‘This is the side effect… ’

I wasn’t sure if he was aware, but his faith in me had grown stronger. I was a brother and a close friend who could help him carry his burdens, and that was probably why he was obsessed with protecting me. If I were to disappear or get hurt, he would have to carry the burdens by himself once again, and I was sure that he was afraid of that.

‘Still… this is going too far. Damn it.’

Kim Hyun-Sung entered the room while I was thinking about him.

Seeing that Jung Ha-Yan was next to him, they had to have scheduled today's night stroll to *that* place. Kim Hyun-Sung was the one who opened the door, but Jung Ha-Yan was the one who jumped into my arms.

'She's been feeling excited lately.'

"Oppa!" Jung Ha-Yan called out.

"You're here," I said.

"B-Because you said you wanted to go for a walk…" she stuttered.

"Yeah. It's uncomfortable being in here all the time," I told her.

"E-Even if you're uncomfortable, it can't be helped since things are still chaotic outside. It's best if you don't go outside right now for your health…" She pointed out.

'She looks really satisfied, though.'

"Miss Ha-Yan is right, Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung commented.

'You look satisfied as well… '

"I see…" I said.

"If I could, I'd like to help you so that you can move around, but this isn't the best time to be moving around. You've suffered a lot, so I'd like you to use this time to rest as much as possible. Is there anything you need? By the way, a Chanelia Hermes series bag appeared at an auction recently. I'm not sure if you'll be happy, but I used the guild's funds to make a bid," he said.

'I don't even like bags all that much… '

Of course, it would be nice to have one.

"It kind of bothered me a bit because there was an empty spot in the display cabinet, but I'm glad I can fill it up," he added.

'Don't look so satisfied, man.'

Kim Hyun-Sung's smile was showing me that he was happy about the idea that I was safe in this room.

"Looks like I've been talking too much. I'm sure you've been waiting… Miss Ha-Yan, can you prepare the spell?" he asked.

"Okay."

Jung Ha-Yan channeled a spell, and Kim Hyun-Sung nodded happily when I wore the necklace imbued with tracking magic. The necklace had to be worn whenever I was out for a night walk.

Jung Ha-Yan finally cast her spell, and the scenery in front of me peeled away.

Jung Ha-Yan's Teleport brought us to a lush but well-paved forest. The guild seemed to have provided us with a trail, and I could already feel that not even a single ant could be seen within a fifty-kilometer radius.

Kim Hyun-Sung had told me that the only place that the demonic energy couldn't penetrate was the Forest of the World Tree. He told me that we could only go here whenever I wanted to take a stroll.

However, I knew that Kim Hyun-Sung was bullshitting when he said that demonic energy was still floating about in the air, so I couldn't help but laugh at what they were trying to do here.

'Is this really necessary… '

Lee Ki-Young Guards' Group Four was here to join us, but they were hiding to ensure that I wouldn't feel uncomfortable during my stroll.

I was sure that they were constantly reporting to Kim Hyun-Sung because the latter always looked like he was ready to fight whenever he was outside with me.

He wasn't saying anything, but I could tell that he was ready to make a move because his hand was always on his waist.

Jung Ha-Yan grabbed my arm as if we were on a date. Kim Hyun-Sung was walking

behind us. The wind was refreshing, but I was frustrated. I had been letting him do whatever he wanted in hopes that he would eventually come to a realization by himself.

For now, I decide to talk to him.

“Mr. Hyun-Sung,” I said, making sure that I would sound confident.

“Yes?”

I gulped a mouthful of my own saliva before speaking what was on my mind.

“I’m sure you’ve already heard from Miss Park Lian, but I think it’s about time I start working.”

“…”

“I’ve been resting for two weeks now. I’m curious about the ongoing restoration of Lindel, and I’m even more curious about what’s happening outside. I understand that you’re worried about the remnants of demonic energy, but I’m sure there are a lot of places that need me, especially if they’re in an emergency,” I continued.

“I can’t let you do that,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“What?”

“How… could you think about something like that, considering your current situation? Have you already forgotten how they treated you?” he asked.

“I mean…”

“You need to be a bit more selfish, Mr. Ki-Young. I’d like you to think about yourself first before thinking about other people. You can leave the troublesome and complicated problems to me and just rest. I’ll take care of everything,” he continued.

“Wait, that’s… Still—”

“No,” he insisted.

‘This bastard… ’

“I can’t let you do all those,” he repeated.

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1. A reference to dialogue in the Korean movie—Nameless Gangster: Rules of the Time. ☜

CHAPTER 525
HALF IMPRISONMENT (3)

'So when will I be allowed… '

I knew that it would be difficult to change Kim Hyun-Sung's mind once he had made a decision, and he also looked more determined than ever. The way he ended the conversation as if he didn't want to hear any more of my words wasn't the actions of the Kim Hyun-Sung I was familiar with.

It wasn't bad that he was obsessed with my safety, but he was going too far here.

'Maybe it'll be for the better if I tell him that I remember everything.'

Perhaps I could tell him at the right time, but… '

'It'll still be a problem… '

I had no idea how he would react once I started acting like I was in disbelief and started crying about what I had done. It was highly likely that he would tighten the security around me, especially when there were unknown threats.

I have heard about the appearance of some people who were shouting that I had to be examined and interrogated. I was sure that there weren't many of them, but it was impossible to guarantee that they didn't exist at all.

I was the symbol of Benigoa, but it was true that I had been corrupted once. The people of the Sacred Democratic Country would probably not say things like that, but I couldn't say for sure for the people outside.

I was sure that many people would want to keep the current Lindel in check. After all, its value was starting to skyrocket thanks to Kim Hyun-Sung's existence.

Right now, I was sure that people within the same parties were fighting over each other about who was correct.

The crisis had already ended, but I was sure that many people would want to keep the Blue Guild in check.

After all, they were trying to split the Federation.

It was possible for mankind to unite, but it was impossible to avoid working for the benefit of one's nation or group.

'It's human nature.'

The best way to keep the Blue Guild in check was to abduct me. Perhaps that was the reason why Kim Hyun-Sung was being overprotective. He was probably thinking that it wouldn't be a good idea to deploy me while rumors were still rampant.

'Are there really that many bad rumors about me?'

There was no way that was true. If they were in their right minds, then their conscience should render them incapable of criticizing me directly. Of course, conflicts couldn't be avoided, but I was confident that the conflicts so far hadn't been serious.

'I'm so curious that I feel like going crazy… '

I really wanted to know the state of affairs outside. I wanted to know just how far they had progressed in the restoration of Lindel and if the joint training was still ongoing.

Benigoa had already appeared, so the systems should already be working properly. I was sure that the closed dungeons and hibernating named monsters had awakened once more. Of course, there could be small changes as well.

Benigoa had gained a massive amount of holy power from the crisis, so she probably created new dungeons and content as well.

I couldn't help but feel anxious because the patch for Benigoa 2.0 might have already started. I was anxious because I was suddenly not receiving any information when I was used to receiving a ton of information every day.

I had been waiting for the visit of my one and only ally, Lee Ji-Hye.

“You went too far. I guess you reap what you sow. You should have acted in moderation; things wouldn’t have become like this if you had simply done that. You got too invested in the production, the situation, and your acting. These are the consequences of your actions. You even abandoned your faithful wife here. You didn’t call me even once…” Lee Ji-Hye grumbled.

“…”

“Were you really unable to appear in my dreams?” she asked.

“I’m sorry, noona. I’ve been repenting on it,” I told her.

“I’m not whining because I want to hear your apology, oppa. I’m not jealous, either. I don’t know if you believe me, but I kind of suffered because of you. It was kind of fun after realizing what was going on, though. *Ahem*, so what are you curious about?” she asked.

“What’s the situation like outside? Give me the details if you can…” I answered.

“…”

“No, I can’t tell you…” she replied.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“There’s a ban,” she said.

“…”

“…”

“Here, look at my tongue. Outsiders need to have this to visit you. No one is an exception. It wasn’t so bad for me because they knew I was close to them, but people they were unsure about had to go through an even tougher evaluation. *Ah*, not only am I forbidden to talk about it, but I’m forbidden from answering your questions as well,” she continued.

“Is that really necessary?” I asked.

“It’s probably because they want to prevent any unforeseeable situations. People

tend to say things unknowingly, so they're trying to prevent that from happening. Of course, the process was pretty difficult," she answered.

"…"

"They told me to fill out the paperwork ahead of time, and they even patted me down. That bitch Park Lian or whatever patted me down as if she was enjoying it. I was really uncomfortable," she commented.

"What exactly is banned?" I asked.

"We're not allowed to use certain words, and we can't write anything either. We can't carry around dangerous items or items that could potentially trigger something. The only thing I can tell you is that a new volume of *How the Alchemist and the Genius Swordsman Loves* was released, and they're selling like hotcakes, but you know…" she paused.

"Yeah?"

"I actually get all this," she continued.

"What do you mean…" I asked.

"Just think about it. Does it even make sense for someone who was just on the brink of death two weeks ago to start working as soon as possible? A doctor even suggested that you should rest for at least half a year, but this method wasn't suggested. I guess they decided to do this because they were worried about your mental health," explained Lee Ji-Hye.

"But still…"

"They're also worried that you got traumatized or something. If that's the case, then this imprisonment protection method is—you've become a lump of meat, a bunch of tentacles groped you, and who knows what happened between all that until you got corrupted? It's not strange that Kim Hyun-Sung is nervous because you're not acting like a traumatized individual at all. The guild master cherishes you a lot… It must be nice," she explained.

"…"

“Who’s the one whose mental health actually needs to be taken care of? Trash like you is pretty rare…” she added.

‘You have no right to say that.’

“It’s not the first time that I had this thought, but your existence really makes me feel relieved. I’m able to comfort myself by saying that at least I’m not as shitty as you. The incident this time has reinforced the idea that you’re truly shittier than me. Anyway, this is the only thing that I can tell you…” she trailed off.

“What?”

“I don’t really know what you’re thinking, but I’m sure most of it is correct. We’re handling it pretty well. I’d like to tell you the details, but I’m forbidden from talking about this, so I can’t say anything. More importantly, it’s been a while since we had se—*Ah*, I forgot that Jung Ha-Yan decided to cast that useless spell on you…” she said.

“What?”

“All mature words have been banned. This wasn’t in the oath, but are you really sure that she changed?” she asked.

“She definitely changed, but there’s not much I can do about her smaller habits. After all, people don’t change that easily,” I replied.

“Anyway, she’s more problematic than the guild master. I’m sure she’s enjoying all this the most,” she commented.

I was sure that everyone, including Cha Hee-Ra and Lee Ji-Hye, had agreed to lock me up here because it was still too early for me to face reality.

Unfortunately for me, they were probably thinking of keeping me here until Lindel recovered or until the bad rumors disappeared.

There wasn’t any way for me to get out of here. I even expressed my anger at Kim Hyun-Sung, but it didn’t work at all. Of course, it wasn’t that strange because he had to have already considered my possible reactions before doing all this.

‘Damn it… ’

I thought Lee Ji-Hye would be a reliable source of information, but it seemed that she wasn't of much help.

Of course, she told me that most of my assumptions were probably correct, but I wouldn't be able to understand what was going on unless I was there.

I was her soulmate, so Lee Ji-Hye should have been more empathetic toward me, but she started talking nonsense rather than trying to be helpful.

"Anyway, you look like a bird locked up in a bird cage, and you look kind of se—*Ah*, seriously? That word is banned, too?" she mumbled.

"…"

"I can't say anything. Damn it, let's just eat. I'm getting hungry," she suggested.

"I'm not eating today," I told her.

"What?"

"I'm on a hunger strike. It has been a while, but I've been telling them that I have no appetite. I'll probably see some results in a few days, though," I replied.

"Oh, that's a classic. How long has it been?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"About twenty days?" I answered.

"That's pretty long, but it's not like you can't do whatever you want. You can go on walks and eat delicious food whenever you want, and look at those luxurious items! Doesn't this remind you of the trend that was popular on the Internet? I remember people becoming millionaires in exchange for being locked up in a room without doing anything for an entire year. Just think of this as something similar to that There are many things that'll keep you entertained here, but you have to relax to enjoy them," she suggested.

"Relax, my ass…" I mumbled.

"I want you to lock me up like this, too, oppa. However, I want to see your other look if possible," she said.

“Stop saying things you don’t mean, noona,” I told her.

“I’m being serious, oppa. *Oh*, it looks like this isn’t banned. She banned strange things instead of things that actually matter. Well, since I’m one of the people closest to you, she must’ve thought that I wouldn’t talk about things like this. Nice,” she said.

“…”

“Can you turn into your other form right now?” she asked.

“I can,” I replied.

“Really? Can you show me?” she requested.

I could see that she was excited, and the Lee Ji-Hye in front of me was different from the Lee Ji-Hye I knew. I had seen her excited before, but she was currently the most excited she had ever been.

I thought about what I should do, but I felt like it shouldn’t matter.

I felt bad, but I still decided to activate Job Change to change my job.

I could feel myself changing.

“This is crazy… Seriously, you don’t have a mask? Did it break?” she asked.

“It restored itself, but it doesn’t have any other function aside from self-restoration. Fortunately, it’s a legendary-ranked item, so I don’t have to rummage through the Inventory to store and equip it. A third party also can’t remove the mask,” I answered.

“Forget about the item. Wear your mask, hurry up,” she urged.

“Why all of a sudden…”

“Wow, you’re giving off a different vibe. Seriously… completely different… Seriously. You’re really se—xy. I wish I had my camera with me. They won’t even allow me to bring it with me… Do they know about this?” she questioned.

“Of course, they don’t. How could I tell them about this, noona?” I replied.

“Can you use any offensive skills?” she asked.

“Of course, but it won’t be that strong since Belial isn’t here. Still, I don’t think it’ll be bad. It won’t be really strong, but the silver lining is that my mana perception has sharpened. Actually, I did some experiments because it has been so boring here, and I found out that I can create spirits and use basic black magic. This form is already useless to me, but it’s better to have it than not, I guess,” I said.

“Why won’t you use it? You have to use it no matter what. Just use it unofficially. If possible, I would like you to use this form whenever you’re with me… well, it’s just my personal greed. Anyway, you want to go outside, right, oppa?” she asked.

“Of course,” I replied.

“How about leaving it to me?” she suggested.

“*Huh?*”

I wouldn’t hesitate to let her handle the matter for me if she was confident that she could handle it. Of course, Lee Ji-Hye wouldn’t really volunteer to do a task if she wasn’t confident of succeeding, so I nodded in delight.

However, she suddenly pinched my thigh and broke the magic shield surrounding me.

“*Ack!*” I yelled unknowingly.

Bang!

Kim Hyun-Sung kicked the door open.

‘You… crazy… ’

I turned my astonished gaze to Kim Hyun-Sung. I couldn’t help but think that the crazy bitch was still holding a grudge because I didn’t appear in her dreams, but there was no way she would do something like that.

I surreptitiously glanced at Lee Ji-Hye and saw her acting demeanor.

Seeing that, I instantly knew what she was trying to do.

'She's really scummy. It hasn't even been that long since I started recovering… '

However, the top priority right now was to play along.

Kim Hyun-Sung stared at me, confused.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung. I-I think there's something wrong with me," I said.

Kim Hyun-Sung's confused face immediately turned pallid.

CHAPTER 526
DOOM RESET (1)

'I honestly didn't think he'd get here this quickly... ' Kim Hyun-Sung had to have run really fast because he arrived here even before my bodyguards. *'If he's faster than my bodyguards, aren't they useless, then? He should just send them to the dungeons.'*

Kim Hyun-Sung's breathing was ragged, and he was covered in sweat. I would believe it if he said that he ran here at full speed because he actually arrived here even before I could finish screaming.

I couldn't help but think that a spell was cast on me that would inform him whenever I was attacked. Anyway, Kim Hyun-Sung looked like a farmer, who was suddenly experiencing a bad harvest, and his merciless frown terrified me.

I was afraid that he would charge at me, so I hurriedly spoke.

He stared at me suspiciously. He could see that I hadn't lost my mind, and I was sure that he noticed that even before I started talking. My appearance was changing while I was weaning a half mask, but my expression was different.

Doom Ki-Young's trademark was his evil smile and mad eyes. However, all that Kim Hyun-Sung could see right now were my confused expression and my lips, which were trembling in fear.

I was also staring at him with wide eyes as if I had no idea what was going on.

I was often told that I resembled a fox or a snake, but it didn't mean that my eyes couldn't resemble a rabbit.

I decided to put on an innocent face, looking like I had no idea what was going on and what kind of situation I was in. I imitated a vulnerable Sunfish so that I would look as weak as possible.

"Mr. Ki-Young? Is that really you?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“It is…” I replied.

He was in disbelief. He looked relieved and confused at the same time.

“Is it really you, Mr. Ki-Young?” he asked again.

“Yes, it’s really me,” I answered.

“How’s your head?” he asked.

“I’m not sure. I’m confused, and I’m a bit scared. I’m not sure why I suddenly turned like this. I-I’m not really sure…” I answered.

“Don’t use your mana for now. Don’t do anything. Just stay where you are,” he ordered.

“But…”

“That mask…” He pointed out.

“I’m not sure either. I suddenly can't see in one of my eyes. I-I tried to take it off, but I can't take it off,” I told him.

‘I’m sure he’s surprised.’

He ran over after hearing my scream, but he found Doom Ki-Young rather than me. In addition, Light Ki-Young was still conscious, so it was indeed a baffling situation for him.

I was sure that he was having a headache because I had no idea why I suddenly transformed into Doom Ki-Young, and how I was awake despite becoming Doom Ki-Young.

Kim Hyun-Sung hurriedly walked over to me. He placed his hands on my shoulder and stared deeply at me. He reached out with his hand to try and remove the half mask, but when I acted like I was in pain, his expression turned grim and confused.

However, his confusion didn’t last long as he started yelling at Lee Ji-Hye, who was currently trembling in fear.

“What the hell happened?!”

It seemed that he had also learned the passive skill of blaming others while he was still a teenager playing at a PC Cafe.

“I-I’m not sure. He suddenly grabbed his head while we were talking…” Lee Ji-Hye replied.

“It’s not her fault, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I don’t know why this happened either…” I told him.

“Damn it…!” Kim Hyun-Sung bit his lips, baffled. He looked at me with a sad glint in his eyes and in disbelief.

“Cordon this area, and don’t let anyone come into this room. Call Miss Hee-Young and Miss Elena right away. And Miss Ji-Hye, let’s talk,” Kim Hyun-Sung ordered.

“What?”

“I want you to tell me exactly what you two were talking about and what you said the moment you entered and until now,” he replied.

“I understand. There’s actually something that’s been bothering me a bit…” she said.

“Damn it, damn it…” he mumbled.

“It’s not her fault, and please don’t scold her too much. I’m sure she was surprised as well. It was too sudden—”

“I understand. So please lie down on the bed. Please…” he begged.

‘Ah, I really didn’t want to do this.’

He was jumping around with a frustrated look. Well, he wasn’t *actually* jumping around, but I could see that he was truly anxious.

He wasn’t like those people who would bite their nails or flail their arms around while anxious, but I could tell that he was really anxious and upset.

Sun Hee-Young, Elena, and Jung Ha-Yan soon arrived, and the room was filled with a

cacophony of noises once more. Kim Hyun-Sung left the room with Lee Ji-Hye, leaving me to Elena, Sun Hee-Young, and Jung Ha-Yan.

I was worried about what they were going to talk about, but I was extremely familiar with Lee Ji-Hye, so she was probably saying something along the lines of these…

'Mr. Ki-Young is suffering. He's really frustrated, and it seems like he's suspicious about something. He was talking about how he was anxious because he felt like everyone in the guild was deceiving him, and that was when he suddenly grabbed his head.'

In addition…

'The mask appeared on its own on his face, and his hair color changed. I really thought he was Doom Ki-Young at first, but I was surprised because he was definitely still Light Ki-Young. Before I could say anything, you kicked the door open. That's it… '

I was sure she was adding a few things to the conversation, like how my negative emotions ended up exploding, which transformed me into Doom Ki-Young. Of course, she was probably going to say that my appearance was the only thing that changed.

Anyway, I was sure that Lee Ji-Hye was doing well.

Meanwhile, Elena and Sun Hee-Young were doing their best to figure out how I transformed into Doom Ki-Young. Jung Ha-Yan stared at me nervously. I gestured to Jung Ha-Yan to inform her that I was fine, even though I was visibly struggling.

The room was chaotic, and I could hear them talking when I asked, "Miss Elena, what happened?"

"It's fine. You don't have to be too alarmed. It's not your fault, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Would it be okay if I took a look at your body? I'd like to see if there's holy power remaining…" she replied.

Holy power, my ass. There wasn't any holy power left in me.

I was sure that Elena couldn't feel anything else other than a dark and gloomy mana. Sun Hee-Young was trying her best to find a way to turn me back into Light Ki-Young, but there was no way she would find a way.

"P-Please calm down for now. You don't have to feel nervous," said Elena, but she

looked the most nervous out of everyone here.

"*Heuk*, why is he suddenly…"

She even started crying. Elena continued to pour her holy power into me, hoping that it would do something, but it was useless. I wouldn't recover the holy power I possessed as the Alchemist of Light unless I activated Job Change.

Actually, Elena let my hand go in shock when I trembled as if I was in pain. Sun Hee-Young was examining me to see if there was something wrong with my body, and she sighed in relief after realizing that there wasn't anything wrong with me physically.

However, her expression turned grim as well.

Meanwhile, Kim Hyun-Sung and Lee Ji-Hye finally returned to the room. Kim Hyun-Sung's expression had somewhat lightened up, so it seemed that her conversation with Lee Ji-Hye went well.

I wasn't sure what she said, but he looked like he was deep in thought, which made me feel bad.

"How did it go, Miss Elena?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"I-I'm not sure either. I've never seen anything like this… His body is rejecting the holy power, but he's still awake… The only thing we can do now is wait and see," Elena replied.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung, is something wrong?" I asked.

"No, nothing's wrong, Mr. Ki-Young. And raise your head," he said.

'You're not Doom Ki-Young yet.'

"You don't have to be confused. I'll resolve this no matter what," he added.

I felt proud of him for his confident remark, but how could he resolve this issue when he was feeling anxious as well? I looked at Lee Ji-Hye after thinking that perhaps it would be better to end things here, but she looked as if she didn't want this to end here.

“I think it’ll be better if we head to the Vatican,” Kim Hyun-Sung suggested.

“What do you—”

“I’m sure we can find out more if we head there,” he said.

“In my current state?” I asked.

“We don’t have any other choice. We have to do something about it, but we’re clueless. Father Basel is really fond of you, and seeing that you’re receiving Goddess Benigoa’s love, Father Basel would definitely help you. In the worst-case scenario…” he paused.

“…”

“The Black Swan Guild will lend a hand as well.” Lee Ji-Hye interrupted.

“Thank you. T-Then, Miss Ha-Yan…”

“No, Guild Master. That’s a dangerous decision. I personally don’t recommend magic making him endure the shock of that spell. I think it’s best if we travel slowly by carriage,” Sun Hee-Young interrupted.

I gave a thumbs up to her because that was something Lee Ji-Hye had to say. Everyone nodded almost at the same time. They had all agreed to go to the Vatican so that I could be examined closely.

I thought that this was a pretty bold and huge plan when I simply wanted to escape the room, so I couldn’t help but wonder whether this was necessary or not.

However, I didn’t really care as long the desired result was achieved.

I looked like Doom Ki-Young, but it was pretty amazing that Light Ki-Young was in control.

Kim Hyun-Sung gave a few orders to the bodyguards before helping me up. I could definitely walk by myself, but I decided to use him as a support since it was more comfortable for me.

The preparations were quickly made, and the bodyguards surrounded our carriage

as if they were escort vehicles surrounding the President's car. The subordinate bodyguards probably received orders not to look at me because only Park Lian and the other leaders could look at me.

Actually, one of them approached Kim Hyun-Sung.

Kim Hyun-Sung handed me over to Jung Ha-Yan, and while Jung Ha-Yan was taking me to the carriage, I heard Kim Hyun-Sung's voice behind me.

"Don't say that ever again."

I looked back and saw Kim Hyun-Sung talking while frowning. I wasn't sure what was going on, but a slow-witted bodyguard probably suggested binding me so that I wouldn't be able to move.

It was a reasonable suggestion because I could do a lot of damage if I were to suddenly lose my mind.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he didn't want to tie me up.

I was wearing Doom Ki-Young's mask, but my mind was still Light Ki-Young.

'He locked me up in a room, though… '

Tying me up wasn't allowed, but imprisoning me was allowed?

"A-Are you okay, o-oppa?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"Yeah, I think I'm fine. There's no need to do this, Ha-Yan. My holy power disappeared, but I'm fine," I replied.

It was a chaotic situation, so the people around me were confused. Kim Hyun-Sung probably thought that no one could see him because I saw him grabbing his head while we were apparently not looking.

He recovered rather quickly, and he tidied himself up before getting into the carriage. He was smiling, but I could see that he was forcing himself to smile as if nothing wrong was going on.

"Don't worry. I'm sure it's nothing."

He was smiling awkwardly to make me feel relieved.

CHAPTER 527
DOOM RESET (2)

'Are the others coming as well?'

They weren't in the same carriage as me, but it was highly likely that they were behind me. The decision was made all of a sudden, and we wouldn't have been able to leave right away if he had decided to wait for the party members who were still carrying out missions for the guild.

However, I was sure that they were going to do their best for us to meet up in the capital.

I was sure that they were thinking about the worst-case scenario that Lee Ji-Hye had probably mentioned because they seemed to be thinking about gathering every powerhouse of the guild.

Of course, the chances were close to zero, but Kim Hyun-Sung was being cautious at every step. However, the reason he decided not to ride in the same carriage as me was probably because…

'It's probably because he wants to let me know that this isn't a big deal.'

It was kind of funny how he was acting calm despite kicking up a fuss earlier. He was acting like it was nothing and that this would be just a short excursion. However, his eyes were trembling.

It was difficult for me to pretend that I still hadn't noticed his true feelings.

Elena's heart was weak, and every time she felt like crying, she would go out and return only after she was done crying. Jung Ha-Yan looked extremely anxious, and she would either scratch her head or smack her lips.

Kim Hyun-Sung had to have said something to her because she sat next to me and started talking about positive topics. Unfortunately, no one was really listening to her, and it actually felt a bit strange to listen to her because she kept on stuttering.

Out of the four who got on the same carriage as me, Sun Hee-Young was the best at hiding her emotions. She was quietly doing her job, and I was once again reassured that she was the most mature out of everyone here.

I wasn't sure if the heavens were helping me, but I suddenly got a fever as soon as the carriage left.

'Wow. The human body sure is interesting.'

'I'm in pain. I'm in pain. I'm in pain. I'm uncomfortable. I'm uncomfortable. I'm uncomfortable.' I chanted to brainwash myself, and I actually felt in pain. The pain wasn't enough for me to sweat a lot or pant, but my face was pale because of a minor headache.

The headache could be cured with holy power, but everyone thought my headache was due to the holy power that Elena had used, so no one wanted to use their magic on me.

The only thing that they could do was watch me.

Kim Hyun-Sung was in a serious conversation with Elena and Lee Ji-Hye, and he showed up once more when the carriage started moving. He was working hard, so I was thankful for him.

'It's understandable from his point of view… '

He was the only one who could handle Doom Ki-Young, and if he were to reappear, it was Kim Hyun-Sung's responsibility to take care of Doom Ki-Young. I was sure that he placed that responsibility on his shoulders.

The only thing that I could do was pretend that I was struggling and weak.

Yeah, the best thing that I could do here was be a hero in a tragic situation.

"How are you feeling?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"I'm not sure. My head hurts a bit—If something goes wrong—"

"No, it's not that serious. We'll reach the Vatican soon, so please just endure it until then. No need to be worried or confused. It's not a big deal. I'm sure it's just a simple

curse," he interrupted me.

"But just now…"

"I was just slightly surprised. That's all it is, so please sleep. You only slept for ten minutes…"

'Stop looking at me so sadly. You're making me sad, too, man.'

Crocodile tears filled my eyes, and he grabbed my hand tightly.

"I'm sure it's nothing serious. What you're worried about won't happen, Mr. Ki-Young," he said.

'Is that so? Then, why are you smiling so bitterly as if you're telling yourself that rather than me? You don't have the basics down, man.'

I was sure that even Sun Hee-Young found it awkward as well because she was once again folding the blanket that she had already folded. Indeed, Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't a good liar. He was pretending like he was fine, but it seemed like he had the passive ability to look sad whenever he felt sad. He looked like a worried, abandoned puppy.

It was easy to deduce his thoughts because he couldn't maintain a poker face.

Anyway, it was a bit ridiculous how they surrounded the carriage with a curtain. They were probably thinking that they had to hide the truth because things could become more dangerous if they were to confess.

'They're definitely having a headache… '

I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung had already heard the source of my negative emotions from Lee Ji-Hye. There was a chance that he would blame himself for being part of the reason why Doom Ki-Young reappeared.

Still, he couldn't really say anything.

Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't a psychopath who would tell the confused and frightened young sheep—Lee Ki-Young—that the city was in ruins because of him. After all, that was something that Demon Summoner Jin Cheong or Demon Worshiper Ito Sota would do.

In the end, Kim Hyun-Sung decided to hide the truth, and I got worried that he would have a mental breakdown once more, but this cunning mouth of mine started talking again.

I decided to talk while looking anxious and ignorant because that was the right thing to do. This was the best time for me to deal the finishing blow. The result was basically decided when they covered the windows. I looked at the window covered with a black curtain with the saddest look possible, and I heard his nervous voice.

"If you're uncomfortable about something, please tell me no matter how small it is, Mr. Ki-Young," he said.

"Well…" I started.

"Yes?"

"Can you open the curtains? I'd like to get some light in here…" I requested.

"…"

"…"

What more could he say? Kim Hyun-Sung lowered his head. He was stuck between a rock and a hard place. He could neither show nor hide the reality outside, but I felt kind of bad because he looked like he was really agonizing over his decision.

'This is why you shouldn't lie, man.'

Small lies would lead to big lies, and big lies would lead to bigger lies. One couldn't hide the obvious, and one couldn't keep on ignoring the truth.

It hadn't been that long since I asked him to open the curtains, but his ever-changing expression showed me his true feelings.

Kim Hyung-Sung chose to remain silent in the end, and that was when he heard my dejected voice.

"I knew it… you're hiding something."

"…" Kim Hyun-Sung remained silent.

“What are you—” I started.

Kim Hyun-Sung interrupted me. “It’s nothing like that. It’s just… it’s difficult to show it to you right now. As I told you before…”

I smiled bitterly and asked, “You don’t need to give excuses, Mr. Hyun-Sung. Is it related to my current appearance?”

He remained quiet and lowered his head.

“Is there… something wrong with me?” I asked.

“No, that’s… not it. You did nothing wrong, Mr. Ki-Young. That’s the one thing I’m sure of,” Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

“Then…”

“It’s just—you’ll have issues dealing with it on your own. That’s it…” he answered.

“I really don’t remember,” I commented.

“…”

“I don’t remember, but I can remember fragmented scenes. I can’t quite grasp them, and they look unreal. Broken buildings, demons climbing the wall, and the ruins of the city. I saw Dialugia as well, and there were demonic cries—”

“You had a nightmare. Don’t think about them right now. Please, I beg you…” He interrupted.

“You locked me in because… I’m dangerous,” I mumbled.

“No, that’s not true,” he said.

“You were afraid that I might start harming people…” I continued.

“No, it’s not like that. It’s actually the opposite,” he corrected me.

“You can be honest with me,” I told him.

“I’m telling you the truth. This isn’t my intention, Mr. Ki-Young. I understand that you’re confused—please don’t think about that…” he said.

“How can I not?” I questioned.

“…”

“How…”

“…”

“How can I… not think about it?” I questioned again.

My voice was trembling with so many emotions that I was even surprised when I heard my own voice.

Kim Hyun-Sung stared at me anxiously, and he looked as if everything was over.

‘I feel like things ended too easily.’

My plan to express my grief calmly ended up being better than acting like I had received a mental shock. It would be nice to see the world outside, and even though the start had been a bit rocky, things were working out smoother than I thought.

Obviously, I spoke once again but with a more determined voice.

“Please open the curtains.”

“But…”

“Open the curtains. Please,” I requested.

At this point, it would be difficult for Kim Hyun-Sung to hide the truth.

I could see many different emotions in his eyes as he bit his lips and pushed the curtain away.

“*Ah…*”

The city was ruined, and it was *too* devastated that I felt really bad.

I thought they were almost done restoring the city, but it seemed that it wasn't that easy to restore an entire city. I thought that they would build the buildings quickly using magic spells, but it didn't seem to be the case.

However, it seemed that Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't lying to me. I could see traces of demonic energy floating in the air within the city. I figured that it was probably the reason why they were having a difficult time restoring the city.

Everything was destroyed. The tall clock tower and the city square were gone.

I couldn't see any adventurer or denizen, and the city truly looked abandoned.

It seemed that the natural environment was affected as well. The lush and beautiful forest was covered in a slimy, sticky substance that was also rotting, and the blue lake wasn't blue anymore.

The hue of the skies seemed a bit different as well.

I finally realized that the damage Lindel had sustained from the crisis was greater than I had ever imagined.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked at me nervously, and the others weren't so different. I looked out the window quietly as if I didn't want to miss the scenery that was passing rapidly.

"It's not… your fault," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"…"

Obviously, he shed transparent, innocent, and guilty tears. I didn't answer him because I had to maintain my current emotions. My shoulders shook from time to time, and it didn't take long for a soundless echo to fill the carriage.

"…"

CHAPTER 528
DOOM RESET (3)

“Excuse me, Mr. Ki-Young. If you’re okay, how about you eat something?” Kim Hyun-Sung suggested.

“No, I don’t have an appetite,” I replied.

“Please, Mr. Ki-Young. You barely ate yesterday.” Sun Hee-Young pointed out.

“O-Oppa, let’s eat together,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“I’m fine,” I told her.

“B-B-But still…!”

“Leave it in front of the door, and I’ll eat it when I feel like eating,” I said.

“Okay…”

The atmosphere changed completely, and I couldn’t help but acknowledge that Lee Ji-Hye’s scummy thought was right.

Kim Hyun-Sung was suffering since the truth he had been wanting to hide was revealed in the worst-case scenario. I was sure he was thinking about many things.

I was sure that in addition to thinking about his mistake, he was also probably worried about my mental health.

Kim Hyun-Sung had lived a selfless life in his past life, so I was sure that he had realized by now that it wasn’t my fault that I ended up becoming a villain that caused a lot of damage to the continent.

He was worried that I would do something extreme.

After all, it wouldn’t be strange if I harmed myself or had a mental breakdown.

I told them that I wanted to be alone, but Kim Hyun-Sung would come to check up on me almost every three minutes, and it broke my heart. I definitely looked like fragile glass in his eyes, and that wasn't all…

'If you're going to lie, you have to do your best not to get caught lying, Hyun-Sung.'

His lie didn't last that long, but it was still a lie. In other words, he was probably worried about how I would take the fact that he had deceived me. He was surely worried about what I thought of him right now.

Of course, the mystery behind my transformation and my mental health had precedence over anything else, but it was undeniable that he had deceived me.

A part of him was probably thinking along the lines of—*what if he's deeply disappointed in the Blue Guild and me?*

If that was true, then I was sure that he would do his best to resolve the issue.

I felt bad for the guild members because they were definitely suffering at the moment, but this was what I wanted. An escape worthy of a thumbs-up.

Even if I wanted to go back to that room, I was sure that they wouldn't allow me.

And I decided to test it out myself…

"Mr. Hyun-Sung," I called out.

"Yes? Yes, Mr. Ki-Young. I'll be right there. Is… there something you need?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"I think… it's best if we return," I replied.

"Wait—"

"Please. Tell the carriage to go back," I requested.

"…"

'What's wrong with him? What's with his face? Is he really going to turn the carriage around?'

“Please…” I begged.

I shed crocodile tears, and that was when I got the reaction that I wanted from him.

“I know what you’re worried about, Mr. Ki-Young,” he said.

‘That’s what I’m talking about, damn it.’

“However, what you’re worried about won’t happen no matter what. No, even if it does, I’ll stop it, so don’t worry too much. You’re not dangerous, Mr. Ki-Young. At least, that’s how I feel…” he continued.

“But…”

“Please trust me. Trust yourself just as much as you trust me,” he added.

And that was basically how it went…

Who would be crazy enough to imprison someone again when they had already locked themselves up in their room because they couldn’t trust the other self inside of them?

If Kim Hyun-Sung decided to handle this situation that way, then he would definitely see a mentally unstable Lee Ki-Young.

Kim Hyun-Sung knew that Doom Ki-Young would return if my negative emotions managed to consume me, so he would definitely do his best to stop me from going into a dark place by myself.

‘It’s your time to return the gesture in kind… ’

It was just an assumption of mine, but I could feel that his confession was nigh. He had been considerate of me in the past twenty days because he was afraid that I might have a mental breakdown after seeing the truth, but the situation had changed.

The main character had to give courage to the despairing supporting character.

In other words, Kim Hyun-Sung had to give me a reason to keep on living.

'Like saving the continent from danger together.'

He could also tell me that he needed me. I could still remember clearly that we had talked about that before while we were in his consciousness, so I was sure that it was about time we talked about it once more.

'The problem is how long it's going to take… '

It probably wouldn't take long, but I would definitely make sure to achieve the regressor event no matter what.

'It's the same for making Doom Ki-Young known to the public… '

I felt like an idiot for not thinking about the typical cliche of controlling the darkness within me. I revised my plan and thought about how I had to show a small group of people that I could control this power to a certain extent, and it would be even better if Benigoa could attest to it.

I was sure that the people around me would discourage me from using it, but characters in a similar position would usually have a critical penalty in exchange for using a hidden power.

The critical penalties were usually something like sacrificing one of your limbs to activate the power, or you would eventually be consumed by darkness if you were to keep using it.

I wanted to make things look more realistic, so I had to do it.

I was sure that the people around me would be even more worried about me.

Well, Lee Ji-Hye had made sure to include her personal greed in this plan, but I didn't really care as long as the result was excellent.

In fact, I would actually welcome it.

While I was happily imagining the outcome of my plan, Kim Hyun-Sung spoke cautiously once more.

"Looks like we'll be arriving at the Vatican soon. I'm not sure why you can't return to your original self, but I'm sure they can help us. So… please don't say what you said

earlier so easily."

"…"

"And I'd like to… sincerely apologize for the unnecessary decision I made," Kim Hyun-Sung added.

"No, you don't have to apologize, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I probably would've made the same decision if I were in your shoes. You did the right thing," I told him.

"It's really not like that—" he said.

"I'm not trying to blame you, so you don't have to look like that. I completely understand that… you had no other choice." I interrupted him.

I was bothered by his expression, so I ended it as if I was putting down the small burden that I had been carrying in my heart.

Meanwhile, the carriage finally slowed down. In other words, we were entering the capital of the Sacred Democratic Country. I stared at the capital with a somber look, but it seemed that the capital hadn't really suffered that much damage.

No, it would be more accurate to say that it hadn't taken any damage at all. After all, only the Federation and Lindel suffered from the demons' arrival. The demons had completely avoided the capital.

Lindel was currently being restored, so the people of Lindel had probably decided to move here because it was the best place to live, second only to Lindel. The fact that I saw many adventurers around reinforced that assumption.

I nodded because I could feel Lindel's energy from the city square of the capital. The majority of the adventurers stared at the carriage carrying the Blue Guild's banner, but I didn't cover the windows to hide from them because the windows were tinted.

However, it seemed that Kim Hyun-Sung was bothered by their stares, because he arbitrarily closed the curtains.

'Is he planning on making the carriage travel all the way to the heart of the Vatican? No, it's highly likely that we'll get off right in front of it.'

It would be bad to reveal Doom Ki-Young's return to the public, so the public had no idea what was going on, which explained their surprise upon seeing the powerhouses of the Blue Guild entering the capital.

They were obviously curious about the identity of the individual in the carriage, but they were probably making their own assumptions, like the Blue Guild moving their headquarters over to the capital. However, some of them had definitely come to the conclusion that Father Lee Ki-Young was in the carriage.

'I'm pretty curious.'

I knew I was still influential in the Sacred Democratic Country, but I was curious about how much influence I had over the people. I wanted to see if people would welcome and worship me if I were to appear in front of them.

However, the carriage didn't care about my thoughts at all as it continued moving.

Soon, it stopped, and I felt everyone leaving the carriage aside from me.

I was certain that we were already in the heart of the Vatican. I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung and the others were currently explaining the situation to the members of the Vatican.

I opened the window slightly and saw only Father Basel and his confidants.

Father Basel looked thirty years older compared to the last time I saw him.

Meanwhile, Kim Hyun-Sung was still worried about the worst-case scenario, but His Holiness nodded worriedly in response to Kim Hyun-Sung's words as he approached the carriage.

The knights discouraged him, but he actually yelled at them and shook them off.

'Our Father Basel is still the same as always.'

The door of the carriage had probably opened, because I could finally hear their loud voices.

"Let go of me! You fools!" Father Basel yelled.

“If the Swordsman of Light’s words are true… it can be dangerous,” a knight said.

“What’s dangerous are your rotten minds, you scum! I told you to let go of me!” he screamed.

“Father Basel!”

“Get out of my sight this instant! Go away right now! You useless fools!” he continued.

“At least…”

One of the knights had to have fallen to the ground because I heard a loud *thud*. It was funny that a holy knight with high stats couldn’t control an old man, but it was proof that Father Basel was really worked up this time.

I saw Father Basel frowning while he was running over to me.

‘I really hope he doesn’t get a heart attack.’

I thought he would grab his heart and collapse due to the shock, but he actually looked calm. He looked at me with a reassuring gaze, and it was clear that my transformation wasn’t affecting him.

“Father Basel,” I said.

“You’ve done well. You’ve… done really well,” Father Basel said.

“I’m sorry for visiting you while looking like this…” I apologized.

“*Hahaha*. Your looks don’t matter; what’s important is that the light inside you must not fade away. I can’t let the light inside you fade away. My eyes can see that you still haven’t lost your light,” he said.

“Father Basel…” I mumbled.

“Since you’ve come all the way here, then there’s nothing for you to worry about anymore. The goddess is watching over you. Yes, I’m sure of it. Now, can you stand?” he asked.

He went over to try and support me. The holy knights who had belatedly followed him tried to stop Father Basel while muttering Benigoa's name, but they failed.

I was actually showing them that I was trying to avoid Father Basel myself. I was acting like I was dirty and cursed. I was showing them that I didn't want to inadvertently harm Father Basel.

When I moved back awkwardly, however, he took a step forward to help me stand up.

"W-We'll help Father Lee Ki-Young… stand up, Your Holiness," a knight stuttered.

"I'm sure that'll be more comfortable… for Father Lee Ki-Young," another knight said.

The holy knights discouraged him, but Father Basel didn't budge.

"Forget it. I'll take him to the goddess myself," Father Basel told them.

"W-we're afraid that he might harm the goddess in his current state, Your Holiness," said a knight.

"For the sake of Father Lee Ki-Young's safety… How about we think—"

"How dare you…! You better watch your mouth, you rotten fools! Your heads are filled with the demon's curse! This is exactly what the demons want, you fools! Can you not see the light inside Father Lee Ki-Young?! Do you still not have any idea why Father Lee Ki-Young looks like this…?! Are you still clueless as to why the demons planted this power inside him?! You fools…!" Father Basel screamed.

"B-But…"

"It looks like your empty minds are filled with the demon's curse! Bring me my weapon! I'll personally crush the demon in the minds of these fools!"

CHAPTER 529
I FORGIVE YOUR SINS (1)

“Did you not hear me tell you to bring it?!” Father Basel shouted.

‘Wow… ’

“You scums! You bastards possessed by the demon! How dare you spout nonsense! How dare you!” he continued.

‘What’s wrong with him? Seriously?’

“Actually! Call Helena, the heresy inquisitor! I must investigate their minds! I must check for myself whether those empty heads of yours are filled with demons!” he ordered.

“It’s fine, Father Basel. There’s no need to be that angry. I understand… how they feel,” I mumbled.

“Father Lee Ki-Young…” he called out.

“They’re speaking honestly because they care about the goddess and you. Entering the goddess’ sanctuary in this form… is definitely…” I told him.

“What are you saying, Father Lee Ki-Young? Goddess Benigoa hasn’t abandoned you,” he said.

Of course, she wasn’t going to abandon me. If anything, I would be the one who would abandon her.

“Don’t be like this. Let’s just go. Don’t let their comments affect you, and there’s no reason to listen to them. Those idiots only care about what they see on the outside…” he suggested.

“Please don’t scold them too much. I’m sure they have their reasons… *Cough*,” I said.

“O-Oppa…” Jung Ha-Yan called out.

“The holy knights are just doing their jobs. Please… calm down. And I’d like it if they supported me. I’m really thankful that you believe in me, but…” I paused.

“…”

“I’m scared that I might bring harm,” I continued.

I glanced at the holy knights, and I saw them walking toward me quietly, looking touched. It was clear that they were reflecting on their mistakes. A weak-hearted female knight was trying to hold back her tears while biting her lips. They were only human. The light that had once illuminated the continent was gasping for breath because of the demon’s curse. They were holy knights, so they had no choice but to give a different opinion. However, they actually felt the same as Father Basel.

“Your Holiness. If you leave Father Lee Ki-Young with us, we’ll do our best to aid him,” Laura said.

“You better do your best. If something happens to Father Lee Ki-Young’s body, I will never forgive all of you,” Father Basel threatened.

“Understood, sir,” she said.

“I’m really… really sorry… and thank you very much,” Laura said to me.

“There’s no need to apologize or thank me, Miss Laura,” I told her.

She looked surprised, and it was probably because she didn’t expect me to remember her name. I actually didn’t memorize her name. I simply read her name that appeared on the status window, but she looked touched when I mentioned her name.

“I’m… sorry,” she apologized.

“It’s fine. No need to worry,” I said.

The holy knights seemed to regret the fact that they even doubted me. An unknown sense of responsibility covered their faces, and it seemed that they believed in me once again. There was nothing more heartbreaking than a regretful scene.

Sun Hee-Young and Elena sighed in relief.

Meanwhile, Kim Hyun-Sung kept his guard up. It wasn't obvious on the outside, but I could tell he was trying to maintain a certain distance from me.

"How long have you been in this state?" Father Basel asked.

"It hasn't been that long, Father Basel. My vision suddenly became dark… I honestly don't remember. I'm sure it's not that different from the information that the holy knights provided," I replied.

"I see…" he mumbled.

"I'm sorry for making you worried," I apologized.

"No, please don't say that, Father Lee Ki-Young. This happened because I'm not good enough at my job, so I can't really blame anyone. It should be me who should apologize to you. Don't be in despair. Don't give up. The goddess cherishes you more than anybody…" he said.

"No, it's not just that… The things… I did before…" I mumbled.

"…"

"So you've heard," he said.

"I haven't heard the details," I told him.

"That darkness isn't you. The Father Lee Ki-Young I know is the kindest and most selfless person I have ever known. He is also willing to lay everything down for the goddess. That's what I think and feel about you. Don't give in to the darkness, and I already told you, right?" he asked.

"…"

"I already told you that I can still see the light inside you," he continued.

"I'm really thankful… that you still think that way," I said.

After exchanging several lines with Father Basel, we soon arrived at the goddess

statue. At first, it seemed like they were going to run several examinations on me before entering the sanctuary, but every examination was bypassed because of Father Basel.

He believed that everything would be resolved once I arrived in front of the goddess.

If the light inside me had already disappeared, then he wouldn't have done something like this. Of course, this was still a dangerous move for him.

If I were truly Doom Ki-Young, and I managed to enter the Vatican by acting like I was still Light Ki-Young, Father Basel would be in danger. He would have to step down from his current position, and I was sure that the cardinals would attack him.

I figured that was the reason he was thanking me.

"How can I see the goddess looking like this…" I mumbled.

"The goddess will forgive and embrace you," Father Basel assured.

"I-I'm afraid…" I told him.

"Let's head in together, then," he suggested.

'Of course, you should come with me.'

Kim Hyun-Sung also walked with us with a grim and wary look.

Jung Ha-Yan and Elena looked the same.

'Guys… ' The atmosphere caught my attention. *'I'm really touched.'*

I could see that they were worried about Benigoa turning hostile against me, and it was obvious from the way they were biting their lips as they walked into the sanctuary.

They would start cheering if Benigoa fixed me, but if she became furious because of my current condition, then they would have no choice but to pull out their weapons.

'Wow, our Hyun-Sung is even thinking about turning Benigoa into an enemy. You're seriously amazing. Yeah, I knew you were going to act like that Ha-Yan. Still, I'm

thankful. It's not Elune, so it's understandable for Elena to act that way. Yeah. I'm also thankful for Hee-Young. Let's gooo!'

We were about to enter the most sacred place throughout the entire continent, but the party members looked like they were about to enter the most dangerous dungeon instead. Even the other guild members of the Blue Guild silently took positions, while some of them quietly secured an escape route.

Quite a few Red Mercenary Guild Members, and even the Black Swan Guild were waiting with bated breaths. Benigoa would definitely not turn hostile against me, but if she were to do such a foolish thing, then she would take a lot of damage.

'By the way, she hasn't said anything? Is she busy right now?'

I was sure she was busy. I wasn't sure what was going on up there, but if she was preparing Benigoa Patch 2.0 and was organizing information related to the contract, then it was only natural that she didn't have time to take care of the real world.

If she were monitoring us, then she would have already sent me a quest.

'She's busy, but I'm sure she can hear the cries down here.'

The statue of Benigoa was looking down at me. Father Basel started praying while the holy knights sang about their beliefs and faith. A warm light was shining through the stained-glass window, and it was such a holy sight that I actually felt overwhelmed.

'Benigoa. Your loyal servant—Lee Ki-Young—has arrived.'

I shouted with all my might in my head, but I didn't hear her voice.

Meanwhile, Father Basel was also calling out Benigoa's name.

"The great and benevolent goddess, your lowly servants have arrived! Please give us an answer to the situation we have encountered. Please guide these pitiful servants with your beautiful voice."

However, the woman didn't answer.

'Isn't this considered negligence?'

If Benigoa didn't speak, then the situation would become a bit serious. I thought about smacking the silent statue that still hadn't emitted any light.

'Benigoa, damn it… Benigoa!'

I had saved the continent from danger, so I didn't expect that she would ignore me like this. I frowned and thought that perhaps her true goal all this while had been recovering from her bankruptcy.

[My lovely Lee Ki-Young! I-I'm here! I'm here!]

Fortunately, the statue finally emitted a faint light. Father Basel and the holy knights looked at the statue quietly while crying tears of joy, but I was busy talking to her.

'Why are you so late, Benigoa?'

[I've… been really busy recently… It's really annoying to wrap things up. I definitely wasn't ignoring or neglecting you… So don't have any strange misunderstandings… And that form of yours…]

'I have my reasons as well, Benigoa.'

[I'm sorry. It's because I'm not good enough… I've disappointed you. I hope you'll stop being mad… You'll accept my apology, right?]

'Forget it. Your apology won't make me feel better. I've actually been asking for you since I woke up.'

[I-I'm sorry, my lovely Lee Ki-Young. I was really busy, and I had to leave for a bit. I'm sure you already know, but I also have to handle the contract…]

'Is that a good enough excuse in your eyes?'

[I-I'm sorry, but you must have a reason for coming here. I'll do my best and use my powers. Additionally, I'd like to express my gratitude… What do you need? I'll provide it as long as it's within my powers…]

'I don't really have a reason. It's just… '

[Yes?]

‘I wanted to apologize.’

[What?]

‘It was for the peace of the continent, but I still ended up slightly damaging the Federation and Lindel. And I’m also wearing this mask right now, so I want to receive forgiveness for that.’

[*Uh…]*

‘Forgive me.’

[I… I forgive your… sins.]

‘No, not like that. With full confidence.’

[What? You crazy bastard! What are you saying… Unni! Unni, are you just going to endure it? Why are you the one forgiving him for the mess he had made at the Federation?! My people are in so much pain…]

[Quiet, Lauren! Do you have any idea how important this is right now? I-I’m sorry, Lee Ki-Young. You must’ve been surprised. You see—]

‘Is that Lauren, the guardian deity of the Federation?’

[*Uh?*]

‘If possible, I’d like to ask her for forgiveness.’

[…]

[…]

[You… You crazy bastard!]

A brighter light engulfed the sanctuary.

CHAPTER 530
I FORGIVE YOUR SINS (2)

The furious voice that filled my head made me flinch, but I didn't bother reacting because I thought that Benigoa would stop Lauren or whatever if she were to do something drastic.

She wouldn't dare to kill me because the continent's fate would be set in stone. After all, I was the final hope of the Sacred Democratic Country, and I was its beacon of light as well. In addition, Kim Hyun-Sung and the heroes of the continent would abandon her, and they could also become hostile toward the heavens.

I could see that Kim Hyun-Sung was wary of the gods because he was staring warily at the blinding light. More importantly, the gods needed holy power, so killing me would basically be killing themselves as well.

They were thinking of recruiting me as well.

Benigoa and the competent gods were worried about the possibility that I would go to hell and join hands with Belial. The *higher* being that Benigoa had mentioned also said that they wanted me, so how could Lauren—a goddess who is weaker than Benigoa—possibly harm me? Unless she was crazy, she wouldn't dare to touch me.

[You bastard! You mere human with a disgusting soul! How dare you mock a goddess?! Aren't you afraid of our divine punishment?!]

A burst of light engulfed me, and my ears started ringing. I also retreated back into my shell when her voice penetrated my ears.

I glanced at Kim Hyun-Sung, and I saw him touching his sword while biting his lips.

I was stupefied at the sight. I was sure that he would pull out his sword and destroy the statue if something drastic were to happen.

'Don't do that… You have to keep it in, Hyun-Sung… '

I was more bothered about making the Vatican an enemy than Lauren.

The light was too strong for me to cast anything, and it was doubtful if the goddess would even accept me in my current form, so I had to prevent making enemies. Of course, this didn't mean that I would do what Lauren wanted me to do. I would never yield; my opponents were the ones who had to yield to me.

I bit my lips while Lauren continued spouting nonsense, which made the light intensify and push me back. It seemed that she was enjoying it.

[I'll send you to hell! You dirty…]

'Alright, fine… Let's go to hell.'

[*Huh?*]

'Fine! I'll go to hell if you want. I'm seriously sick and tired, so I'll go to hell.'

[*Uhh…]*

'I don't need your forgiveness. I'll just go to hell. Belial! Where are you? Belial!'

[*Uh… Huh?*]

'All right, let's go all out, and I have nothing more to say to you. You're on your own. I heard that directly harming continental beings is prohibited for you, so I don't know why you're acting this way. Do you have enough holy power to recover if you receive a penalty? You must be trying to go bankrupt again, but you know better than anyone what will happen if you stop receiving my support, right?'

[Lee Ki-Young, that's not what Lauren meant… She meant something else…]

'It's the same thing for you, Benigoa. You keep calling me your lovely follower, but you didn't do anything while I was being bullied. I sacrificed myself to save the continent, and I came here to repent for the sins I committed, and now, you won't forgive me? It seems that your doctrine about how your followers will be forgiven if they repent was a bunch of bullshit.'

[…]

'Do you really think that I will be willing to go up there if you scare me like this? My sins haven't been forgiven just yet, so what will you do if someone nitpicks about that? So what if I have a disgusting soul; does that mean I'm beyond redemption? You're too narrow-minded. In that case, it's probably better to become a demon. It'll make things a lot better for you, Lauren.'

[You're… still!]

'You mustn't forget who made it possible for you and I to talk like this. I saved the continent, and you're talking about how I'm mocking a goddess. Think carefully about who will lose more if you become my enemy. From the restoration of the Federation to the sanctuary—no, I'll just abandon the sanctuary.'

[Do you really think that my followers will just stand by and do nothing?!]

'What are you going to do? Are you going to perform a miracle? Go ahead and try. Let's see who'll win. You have a bad reputation among the people, so let's see who will have an easier time moving the people. Give me a month, and I'll make sure that everyone will treat you as the traitor who sold out the Federation to the demons, Lauren. Look forward to it.'

[No one will believe you, you idiotic bastard!]

'Are you sure about that? It seems that you trust your believers a bit too much.'

[My lovely Lee Ki-Young! I think you're too worked up… Let's calm down a bit… If what you want is forgiveness, I can forgive you as many times as you want. Y-Yeah, to be honest, you don't really have to ask for forgiveness. After all, you only did those for our sake. That's what Lauren is trying to say here… She was just surprised because you're asking forgiveness when you don't need to be forgiven.]

'Forget it, Benigoa. I'll just go to hell.'

[Lee Ki-Young, Lee Ki-Young!]

[Stop being so pathetic, unni! That cockroach is being cocky because you're acting like this. It's about time we punish him.]

[Be quiet, Lauren! I want you to—]

[How long are you planning on getting dragged along by this disgusting human?! This is all for you! I'm simply addressing the elephant here!]

[Laureeeeeeeeeen!]

There was a loud explosion.

I wasn't sure what had happened, but it sounded like Benigoa decided to beat her up.

There was radio silence afterward, so it was clear that we got disconnected. I had no idea what was going on, but I could deduce it. It seemed that our incompetent Benigoa was more competent than Lauren. Benigoa definitely got worried that I would go to hell and become her enemy, so she immediately moved to stop Lauren from speaking.

I didn't really mean everything I said earlier, but I could do them. It would be kind of difficult, but I had a high chance of turning Lauren into a corrupted demonic goddess. The Federation's religion had fallen, and they had lost their foundation.

Lauren no longer had any temples, so she would have to expend more holy power to perform a miracle or do something on the continent. Considering the amount of holy power Lauren had on hand, performing a miracle was close to impossible for her.

The expenditure would be even higher if Benigoa Patch 2.0 was finally applied to the continent. Many of her believers had been calling out her name while crying, but she didn't respond, so who would still believe in her?

I was convinced that I could turn her into a corrupted traitor with just a few words. It was easy to create rumors, but erasing them required dozens of proofs and documents. To make matters worse, she couldn't provide those things because she lacked holy power.

The only thing that she could do was emit a bit of light and give some quests to adventurers. In other words, there was no way she could defeat me if we were to go down that route.

Meanwhile, Benigoa seemed to have finally learned how to act like a goddess.

'I raised her pretty well. Seriously… '

I wasn't sure if it was because we had been working together for quite a while now, but she had become quick-witted. I could tell that she had changed because she was trying to stop Lauren from worsening the situation.

It was like watching a naive new hire adapting to the company.

Soon, I heard Benigoa's voice once again, and I became certain that she had acclimatized to her surroundings.

[Unni, *sniff!*]

[Stop crying, and I'm not your unni. Apologize to the lovely Lee Ki-Young right now.]

[*Sniff!*]

'That's right.'

[Aren't you going to apologize?]

[Unniii…]

[I'm sorry, Lee Ki-Young… I'm sure you were surprised. She's a bit naive, so I'd appreciate it if you could find it in your heart to forgive her. I'll do whatever I can to give you what you want. Now, hurry up and apologize.]

[I-I'm sorry. I made a big mistake. *Sniff…!* Please forgive me.]

[Feeling better, Lee Ki-Young?]

'…'

[Can't you forgive her for me? We've been doing fine until now. I'm sure you don't want things to go downhill from here, and we might end up working together down the road, so let's not force each other's cards.]

'Yeah… that's true. I honestly don't want to do it, but I'll accept the apology for you, Benigoa. Anyway, she has to forgive me for my sins. That's fair, don't you think? As I've mentioned before, Lauren must forgive me herself.'

[Lauren still lacks a lot of holy power… and I don't have the luxury to have a retainer.

It won't be directly from her, but I think I can make the shape using light. Will that work?]

'It's fine as long as I can see you or Lauren. Please do it quickly once you're ready since the others are waiting.'

[I'll do it right now! It's your request, after all! I don't know about the others, but it's only right for me to forgive *your* sins immediately. Yeah, that's r-right. But…]

'You don't have to worry about the situation afterward. I'll make sure that you'll earn it back.'

[I knew it… I'm always thankful—]

'It's fine. I'm not doing this just for myself. It's for the entire continent. So for the continent, you must also work with Bel—'

[L-Let's hurry up and start!]

It seemed that Benigoa didn't really want me to mention Belial because she quickly changed the subject and started the play. The bright light that filled the sanctuary vanished abruptly.

Father Basel and the holy knights' expressions turned grim.

Kim Hyun-Sung and the guild members bit their lips.

It was clear that they thought that something had gone wrong, but they started to relax when the light returned and filled the sanctuary once more. The light even turned into Benigoa. Of course, her figure was less vivid than her perfect form during her fierce battle against Belial, but she still gave off a mysterious air.

The holy knights and the others were definitely touched by the sight because their voices filled the sanctuary.

"Goddess Benigoa…"

Father Basel even shed tears of joy.

"Even Goddess Lauren…"

The holy knights were surprised to see Lauren—the Federation's guardian deity.

I made sure to look fragile in front of the goddesses.

Benigoa and Lauren sprinkled a kaleidoscope of lights and spoke.

[I forgive your sins.]

[*Sniff!* I forgive your sins.]

The light enveloped me, and I immediately activated Job Change to change my job.

I could feel my physique changing to accommodate holy power.

'Seriously, who will still criticize me?'

It was true that I had committed sins, but the goddesses had forgiven me, so I felt like all of my sins had been washed away. I could finally understand why many religions emphasized repentance.

There was nothing more satisfying than being forgiven by one's god.

[I forgive Lee Ki-Young.]

I felt like both my body and soul were overflowing with light.

CHAPTER 531
MIRROR LAKE (1)

[We need your help.]

“Goddess Benigoa…”

[Lauren and I have vanquished most of the darkness inside of him, but it is only a temporary measure. The darkness is still inside of him. The light of the continent relies on you the most, so please watch over him. Support and guide him.]

“We understand.”

[Father Basel, thank you for always believing in me. Thank you for not doubting this incompetent goddess.]

“How… could I doubt you, Goddess Benigoa…” Father Basel muttered.

[Believing in Father Lee Ki-Young also means that you believe in me. You’re qualified to sit next to me because you saw the light hidden in the darkness. I hope you’ll continue working hard.]

“*Sniff…!*”

[Swordsman of Light, I have high expectations of you.]

“…”

[You’ve put down the heavy burden.]

“…”

[I ask that you guide him in the right direction so that he will not walk down the wrong path.]

“I don’t plan on being his guide, but…” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

[I understand what you're trying to say, but…]

"I can walk with him," he said.

[…]

"…"

[If that is your wish.]

"…"

The light intensified as Benigoa smiled and wrapped the situation up. I was really satisfied, and my smile widened as the light washed my sins away.

I reviewed the footage that Lee Ji-Hye had recorded in the comfort of my room, so I could edit the parts that were weird, but nothing really caught my attention. I wanted to applaud because it was basically a miracle.

I couldn't help but smile at the thought that this recording would spread throughout the Sacred Democratic Country and the continent. I became even happier when I thought about how I finally managed to get out of that jail and the fact that a Doom Reset was now unlikely to happen.

It had been four days since then, and the Sacred Democratic Country had been praying all day over the past four days. The Vatican was also abuzz with conversations about the miracle that Father Basel had witnessed.

Father Basel asked me to stay at the Vatican for a few days to obey the goddess' request, but I would like to return to Lindel as soon as possible to continue the restoration works, but there were a few things bothering me, so I changed my mind.

'I should read the room.'

The city was ruined, so nothing would change even if I were to hurry over them. I had been really thirsty for information since I woke up, so it was about time I found out what the public thought about me and how the adventurers of the Sacred Democratic Country felt about the crisis.

My heart fluttered at the thought of reading the articles and news that I couldn't read

while I was in that jail. I was born during the Information Age, so it would be an understatement to say that I was excited to start reading articles and news.

'I'll start from the articles that were released right after the battle… '

[The Miracle Created by Goddess Benigoa. Nightmares Are Lifted, and the Sunset of the Continent's Crisis Has Arrived. - Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Lindel Daily Report.]

"*Hmm… Mmm…*"

[A Great Victory That Was Close to a Miracle. A Few Casualties Confirmed. - News Anchor Michael of the Democratic Newspaper.]

'He's right.'

[Prisoners in the Federation. Miraculous Rescue. The Nation is Gone, But the People Remain. Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Lindel Daily Report.]

[Dialugia, the Guardian Dragon of the Democratic Country, Moved to Celia to Recover. - Reporter Kyosuke of the Celia Daily Report.]

[Father Lee Ki-Young Still Unconscious. 20th Day of Coma. Father Basel Appears at the Prayer Meeting at the Capital of the Democratic Country—We must pray. - News Anchor Michael of the Democratic Newspaper.]

[Difficulties in the Recovery of Lindel. A Full-Scale Restoration Is Expected to Begin Only after about Three Months. Cha Hee-Ra, the Guild Master of the Red Mercenary Guild, Is Expected to Make an Announcement Tonight about Securing a Temporary Shelter and Benefits for the Adventurers… - Columnist Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Democratic Column.]

[Denizens of the Democratic Country Are Furious from the Lack of News about Father Lee Ki-Young. 34th Day of Coma. The Denizens Are Worried That the Democratic Country Is Hiding Something. - News Anchor Michael of the Democratic Newspaper.]

[The Spokesperson of the Blue Guild, Team Leader Kim Mi-Young's Announcement Isn't Effective. Conspiracy Theories about Father Lee Ki-Young's Death Are Making Rounds. - Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Lindel Daily Report.]

[A Candlelight Vigil Held by the Denizens of the Democratic Country. Will Their Cries for the Truth Work? - Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Lindel Daily Report.]

[The Entire Democratic Country Is Celebrating the News of Father Lee Ki-Young's Awakening. Some Are Concerned… - Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Lindel Daily Report.]

I finally had a gist of what happened while I was asleep. Dialugia was resting in Celia, and it seemed that everything was wrapped up pretty well, aside from the ongoing restoration works of Lindel.

However, I was bothered by the fact that the Blue Guild didn't announce to the public the news that I was already awake.

'They just announced that I was still in bed. Man… they're just… '

I wasn't sure what they were thinking, but they made it seem like I was still in a coma, even though I was already awake. I couldn't help but think that they would have continued hiding the fact that I was already awake if it hadn't been for the candlelight vigil that the denizens held for me.

I was sure there were many political reasons, but I felt a shiver down my spine when I thought about how they imprisoned me and announced that I was still in a coma.

'I'm sure it's all over now.'

I turned and saw holy knights gathered in one place.

There were many other interesting articles.

[What did the Swordsman of Light see while he was unconscious? A vivid story told by the Guild Master of the Blue Guild, who has appeared in the news for the first time. The Guild Master's ultimate move—Hope of Sunset—was a gift from the honorary cardinal. This heart-warming story has become a hot topic throughout the Democratic Country.]

'Our Hyun-Sung really showed off this time, but his moving story was great. I'll allow him to tell as many moving stories as he wants.'

[The new volume of How the Alchemist and the Genius Swordsman Loves has been published! The mysterious author has been interviewed—I hope my writing strengthens the people. - Report Jung Yumi of the Lindel Cultural Team.]

"Things like this are nice as well. They're definitely helpful."

I nodded because articles about mundane things would give people strength during difficult times. We had driven away the demons, but we were still recovering from our wounds.

There were definitely many adventurers who had been driven to a corner mentally. It didn't seem much, but things like these were helpful, so it was only right for guilds or the nation to support them.

[How the Alchemist and the Genius Swordsman Loves movie adaption confirmed! Many investors are expected, and many fans are cheering. However, there are some concerns about the possibility of derailing from the original work…]

At this point, I thought it wouldn't be a bad idea if the Blue Guild used this

opportunity to officially invest in the book. We were going to be a platform that would provide services rather than a publisher, and it wasn't that difficult to invest in things. Our business would only grow moving forward, so it was best to start thinking about it ahead of time. The profit wouldn't be as big as other businesses, but it would be better than nothing.

I also thought that it wouldn't be bad to create a play of some sort…

I couldn't help but smile while thinking of ways to grow the Blue Guild's business products. This relaxing time that I got after a while helped me realize just how precious this time was because I had enough time to read and do things.

There was also some news from Mirror Lake, and the news was mostly about how Father Lee Ki-Young met the goddess at the Vatican. The denizens of the Democratic Country gathered and prayed today as well, and it was a sight that kept me entertained.

I felt really comfortable because the guild members gave me guidelines on what actions I should take, so I didn't have to use my brain.

Right now, it wouldn't be bad to go outside and start a publicity campaign.

I could help with the restoration works with my bare hands and exhausted body, and I could also shed tears of remorse while holding the hands of the denizens.

In a nutshell, there were many things I could do.

While I was deep in my thoughts, I saw Oscar—no, Aris bringing a pot of chrysanthemum tea into the office.

"Miss Oscar…" I greeted.

"Please call me Aris, Father Lee Ki-Young. You did the same thing earlier… I'll be sad if you keep calling me that," Aris said.

"I'm still not used to it," I said.

"You're feeling fine, right?" she asked.

"Yes. As you can see, I'm fine. I can already walk around without any issues," I

replied.

“Still, don’t push yourself. The others are very worried… Your body doesn’t belong only to you, you know?” she reminded me.

Her last line frightened me for some reason, but I was sure that it was all in my head.

“I understand that you want to run over to Lindel right now, but please wait a bit longer. You’re already carrying a heavy burden, and even though it’s just temporary, I want you to enjoy your time off,” she said.

“I know, but…”

“How about a cup of tea?” she offered.

“Thank you,” I said.

“It’s been a while since we got together like this, so it’s nice. *Ah*, how was it yesterday?” she asked.

“Yesterday…”

“I heard that Senator Caitlyn, Elise, and Marilyn stopped by,” she answered.

“*Ah*, I had a good time. It was kind of burdensome because they were worrying about me a bit too much, but it’s been a while since I saw them, so I had fun,” I replied.

“Still, it must have been exhausting,” she commented.

“I appreciate your worry, Miss Aris,” I told her.

‘It was an important matter… ’

It was important for me to take care of my connections. I could be sitting in the highest position right now, but I would still make sure to stay grounded.

‘It’s about time I take care of them.’

Senator Castlerock, Marilyn, the chief senators, Bishop Jayna, Helena of the Heresy Inquisitors, the important merchants of the nearby cities, the representative of the

denizens, and the Eight Seats of Dawan and Celia had already visited me.

It was indeed exhausting, but I had a lot of fun.

I managed to enjoy myself because they told me a lot of information about the world outside, and it was also a rare opportunity to learn about what they thought of the crisis.

I found out that everyone had their own opinions about the crisis, so I had to make sure to organize the information.

I couldn't really spend time with Kim Hyun-Sung and the guild members because so many people had been visiting me recently, and I considered that to be the drawback of the attention I had been getting from the people.

Still, I had enough of seeing them while I was still imprisoned, and I was sure that they weren't complaining about my visitors because they were quiet.

While I was talking to Aris, the door was flung open, and I saw a familiar face. I already knew the identity of the visitor judging from their footsteps and panting from afar.

"Hyung-nim! *Huh?* You were here as well, Miss Oscar?!" Park Deok-Gu called out.

"H-Hello," Oscar greeted.

"You're always working hard… Anyway, hyung-nim," he said.

"Yeah?"

"It's about time we ride a boat to Mirror Lake!" he replied.

"What?"

"We have decided to finally visit the Mirror Lake that you've been wanting to visit for the longest time!" he answered.

'When…? When did I say that I want to go there, you pig?'

CHAPTER 532
MIRROR LAKE (2)

“Why are we going there all of a sudden? Don’t we have work that has to be done? We need to continue the joint training as well,” I said.

“The restoration project is already ongoing, and there’s still time until the training begins. It hasn’t been that long since the battle ended, so we need time to reorganize.

”Just think of this excursion as a mini vacation. If we restart the training so soon, the atmosphere won’t be like before, so it’s great to take a small break. Yes, that’s right!” Park Deok-Gu replied.

“But still, a dungeon or—”

“We already went to a dungeon while you were still unconscious! And you’re just recovering, so don’t even talk to me about going to a dungeon. Hyun-Sung was actually worried that you might head to Lindel right after waking up,” he said.

“That’s true, but…”

“The denizens will definitely not want to hear about how we’re already making you work, even though you’re still recovering. I’m sure they want to hear that you’ve been eating and resting at a nice place.

”Things have been pretty chaotic because of *that* side effect, so we need to let them know that you’re having fun. You also have to know just how important you… have become to the continent,” he explained.

“Wait…”

“I’ve been there a few times, so you can definitely look forward to it. There’s no place like it throughout the entire continent,” he added.

“When did you go there?” I asked.

“Well, a few times a long time ago… I visited a few times to do a field survey, but that’s not important. By the way, will you be joining us, Miss Oscar? I’m sure the others will like it if you join,” he asked.

“No, someone needs to protect the Democratic Country, and I’m also very busy…” Oscar replied.

“Is there anything I can help you out with?” I asked.

“No, I think it’s best if you go with them, Father Lee Ki-Young. You’ve been working nonstop, so it’s about time you slow down and catch your breath. It only seemed like yesterday when you said you’d go on a picnic with everyone in the guild… Isn’t this your first time going together with them?” she asked.

“Yes, I think…” I answered.

“Then, do it!” Park Deok-Gu chimed in. “Hyun-Sung will be really happy as well! To be honest, he’s a really shy individual, so he seemed like he was having a hard time making that suggestion.

”I brought it up when he was deep in his thoughts, and he seemed really happy about it. I don’t even need to mention Ha-Yan noonim, right? It’s about time you take the next step with her. I’ll give you my support, so don’t you worry about it.”

“It’s nothing like that…”

“I know you care about her, but she’s an adult now. Protecting her or cherishing her are really old-school ideas. If you like her, you can tell her with words or with your body. That’s my suggestion as the love doctor,” he continued.

‘I don’t think she’ll want to protect me… ’

“B-But don’t you think she’ll feel a bit embarrassed if the two of you suddenly get closer to each other? Father Lee Ki-Young, you might startle Miss Ha-Yan, so I think it’s best if you approach her slowly. A woman knows a woman’s heart the best, after all…” Oscar suggested.

“That’s not true. My intuition as the love doctor is telling me that Ha-Yan noonim has been waiting for hyung-nim to approach her. She may have been thinking about every possible scenario that may happen during the trip. I’m sure of it. Yeah!” he

shouted.

'How is he so sure of it?'

Park Deok-Gu had obtained the attribute Morale Shout during the recent crisis, but I had a feeling there was a different meaning behind it. His confident expression told me that he was confident, and I avoided his gaze because his eyes seemed like they could see through me.

'A picnic this time?'

It was highly likely that Kim Hyun-Sung had been agonizing over it. Even though he had promised that we would go to Mirror Lake while we were talking in his consciousness, I couldn't remember agreeing to it.

The current state of affairs made it impossible to take a vacation, and I was sure that he was aware of that, which was why he had been agonizing over it.

And that was probably when this pig suddenly talked to him about it…

Outsiders wouldn't understand why we were going there, but I had a feeling that he had used his Morale Shout to endorse a guild trip to Mirror Lake.

Kim Hyun-Sung probably declined, but…

'He's thinking about me.'

The goddesses had already forgiven me, but I had been showing them that I was still feeling guilty deep inside. I had been meeting many people recently, but I would sometimes show them a bitter look while staring out the window.

It was an act to show everyone that I was still being burdened by the sins that I had committed, but our lovely regressor definitely thought that a short vacation would help me mentally.

It made even more sense considering the probability of another Doom Reset.

Kim Hyun-Sung considered my mental health more important than anything else, and taking a breather would definitely help not just me but the guild members as well. They weren't expressing it, but I was sure that they were mentally exhausted as

well.

They definitely had fun imprisoning me, but it was probably not as effective if we went out there and had fun as a group.

'It doesn't sound like a bad idea.'

However, Park Deok-Gu's manner of speech bothered me. If it weren't for that, then I would have agreed to his suggestion right away. I thought about many possible answers, but nodding here seemed to be the best answer.

'I'm sure nothing will happen.'

I also had to make sure that Kim Hyun-Sung and I would have time to spend by ourselves. If we went outside, then it would be easier for me to do something like that.

"Anyway, are you going? Honestly, I'd like it if you went with us. Actually, even if you decline, I'm going to drag you with me! You can't decline, so keep that in mind!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

"No, you don't have to drag me there, Deok-Gu. I've always said that I wanted to go there, but I never really managed to visit the place, so it won't be so bad for me to actually go there this time," I told him.

"Really?" he asked.

"Yeah."

"Yes! Let's gooo!" he cheered.

'Damn, this pig actually looks happy about it.'

He was acting as if they had prepared a surprise party for me there. He even ran up to me and lifted me up. He had to have been aware that I had already fully recovered because he carried me around.

"Are you really going with us?!" he asked again.

"Yes, I really am going with you," I replied.

“I was really nervous that you’d say you weren’t going this time as well. I knew you it; I knew you’d go this time,” he said.

“Was I really looking forward to going there?” I questioned.

“I think I already asked you seven or eight times by now. However, every time I ask you to go there, you’re either busy or too invested in something… Are you really not going, Miss Oscar?” he asked.

“Yes, I’m fine, really,” Oscar answered.

“Well… it is kind of bad for you to go on vacation right now. I feel bad…” he said.

“No, please don’t think that way. We’ll have time to go on a vacation in the future,” she assured him.

“Well, I’m glad you think so…” he commented.

“So, when are we leaving? If we need to prepare—” I started.

“Right now!” Park Deok-Gu shouted.

“What?”

“We can leave right now. Everything is ready,” he replied.

‘This pig’s really convincing… ’

Amazing. I could have declined the invitation, so I wasn’t sure why he prepared everything beforehand, knowing the risk. However, I became certain that it was the reason he cheered and was so happy when he heard that I would go with them.

“You can just leave with us with the clothes on your back. We have prepared a large carriage, and it has everything we need. You just have to follow me during the trip,” he said.

“…”

“Let’s go,” he continued.

“The guild members are the only ones who will go, right?” I questioned.

“I asked the Mercenary Queen and the shaman, but they were too busy. However, I think they don’t feel comfortable going with us because the guild members are also going on this trip.

”Honestly, the city will be at a loss if the Mercenary Queen leaves Lindel and the same thing for the shaman, and I think that’s the main reason. Anyway, let’s hurry up. I’ll buy you a souvenir on the way back, so stay safe, Miss Oscar,” Park Deok-Gu said.

It seemed that the theme of this trip was a picnic, so it wasn’t strange that Cha Hee-Ra and Kasugano Yuno didn’t want to participate.

Lindel was already chaotic, but if the Red Mercenary Guild disappeared along with the Blue Guild, then the chaos would definitely be exacerbated.

After saying goodbye to Aris and walking around the Vatican with Park Deok-Gu, I heard people telling us to have a safe trip. I walked out after acknowledging them, and then I saw Cha Hee-Ra talking to Jung Ha-Yan.

“*Uh…*”

I rubbed my eyes, but they were still Cha Hee-Ra and Jung Ha-Yan. They wore serious expressions, and they were definitely having a conversation. It seemed like they were asking each other about their well-being. However, it was an unbelievable sight. Still, I nodded because it was better than them being at odds with each other.

Wait, perhaps…

‘Perhaps they grew closer because of the recent crisis?’

It was highly likely that it was the case. In addition, there were times when Jung Ha-Yan was kind toward Cha Hee-Ra. I could also still remember how Cha Hee-Ra saved me during that evil old man’s reign of terror.

She had acknowledged me back then, and I was sure that this was a similar situation to that.

Jung Ha-Yan thought that she could handle the crisis by herself, but everything went

wrong, and Cha Hee-Ra made a cold but reasonable decision.

While Kim Hyun-Sung and Jung Ha-Yan were shell-shocked, she stood in the front line and showed her courage by driving out a powerful demon.

Jung Ha-Yan assisted, and Kim Hyun-Sung finished them off, but Cha Hee-Ra's contributions couldn't be underestimated at all. After all, if it hadn't been for her decision-making and selflessness, we wouldn't have been able to survive that crisis.

'Even though she's not a member of our party… '

She was worthy of my applause.

Aside from the fireball she cast at the final phase of the crisis, Jung Ha-Yan hadn't really done that much, so it wasn't strange that she wanted to look around and see for herself the city's current status.

It was impossible to predict the continent's future, so I figured that Jung Ha-Yan had acknowledged Cha Hee-Ra as a woman that was vital for our future. I was confident in my assumption because I could see through Jung Ha-Yan's thoughts.

I continued walking, and we soon passed the main gate. The guild members could finally see me. Park Deok-Gu shouted, and Cha Hee-Ra approached me. She probably came here to tell me to have a safe trip.

"Are you feeling better, darling?"

"Yeah, I think I've gotten better… Are you really not going with us, noona?" I asked.

"I'd like to really play with you, but I can't hold you back when you're going out to play with your co-workers. I wanted to be shameless and join, but that guild master of yours was hinting at me not to go. Seriously… he's so ridiculous. I had to tell him right then and there that I didn't want to go. Anyway, I came here to tell you to have a safe trip," Cha Hee-Ra said.

"That's unfortunate. How about Yuno?" I asked.

"She's really busy, and she has become quite influential over the Federation. She actually asked me to deliver you a letter when I met her last time, so I brought it with me today," she replied.

"*Ah*, thanks, noona," I said.

'Hee-Ra noona is pretty popular… '

I knew she was close to Kasugano Yuno, but I didn't expect that they were this close.

Now that I thought about it, I could remember that Elena, Lee Ji-Hye, and her had gone out a few times… I could even remember seeing her at a cafe with Sun Hee-Young.

It could be just me, but I felt great to see her getting along with the guild members.

I opened my arms, and she hugged me tighter than I thought.

And that was when I heard her whisper into my ear…

"Buy me a souvenir, and once your trip is over, you're mine for three days, okay?"

'Hee-Ra noona, that's a bit… '

"Don't make me repeat myself. Don't get hurt, and…" she trailed off.

'I don't want to get hurt either, noona.'

"I'm telling you this just in case, but even if something happens, don't wear that mask no matter what. Do you understand? Stick to Jung Ha-Yan as much as possible," she advised.

'I can't believe I'm hearing that from her… '

"That won't happen. The others will be there as well, so I won't be in any danger…" I assured her.

"I'm saying it just in case. I'm sure you know that I have something similar to that mask as well. You can't really compare the danger level between the two, but there are always consequences for using that kind of power.

"And don't even think that you can control it… I know it's weird that I'm talking to you about that here, but—ugh, I'm nagging you again. Anyway, we'll have a lengthy chat—a three-day chat about it—once you return. I love you, darling," she confessed.

“Yeah…”

“I love you,” she repeated.

“I… love you, too, noona,” I mumbled. I felt like I had no choice but to respond that way, but it wasn’t that bad because I managed to confirm that the Doom Reset bait was working.

CHAPTER 533
MIRROR LAKE (3)

The upcoming darkness that Benigoa had been talking about at the sanctuary was etched not only on the guild members' heads but on the heads of the Sacred Democratic Country's denizens as well.

Obviously, the denizens had no idea that Light Ki-Young was capable of turning into Doom Ki-Young on his own, but the party members and a few close comrades seemed to have caught on.

To be exact, it was more like someone leaked it or something.

It wasn't like I said—*I can become Doom Ki-Young, let me show you*—and then summoned a mask. I simply told them—*I think I can change into Doom Ki-Young without losing my mind.*

Obviously, Kim Hyun-Sung and the party members frowned.

Things proceeded smoothly afterward. I couldn't guarantee anything, so they came up with their own theories. They gathered everyone's opinion and came up with a few conclusions.

1. Lee Ki-Young is capable of changing his job into Dark Plaguelord from Alchemist of Light.

2. The job change side effect is a deluge of negative emotions that can easily break his mind.

3. Only Benigoa can turn his job back to Alchemist of Light.

4. If he uses its power or remains as the Dark Plaguelord for an extended period of time, there is a possibility that his mind will get consumed by the darkness.

5. It is a curse with no cure, and there is only one preventative measure—taking care of his mental health.

That was all…

Of course, it was what I had been hoping for, and it was really cliched. Theory number four seemed more realistic, and it would also be a suppressor for Jung Ha-Yan and the other troublemakers.

Negative emotions would make me lose my mind, and they prepared many events to take care of and improve my mental health.

One of those events was this picnic event.

It was an event that coincided with Kim Hyun-Sung's wish to let the members take a break, but I felt like the event wouldn't really help me.

I looked behind me and saw a large ship. Yes, a ship rather than a boat. I was shocked when I saw that they managed to attach a large ship to the back of our carriage. I thought I would get used to it soon, but I still couldn't get used to it, even though it had already been a few hours since we embarked on our journey to Mirror Lake.

Park Deok-Gu had to have noticed that because he started talking to me with confidence. However, it wasn't my first time hearing his story.

"I was slowly constructing that thing whenever I'm free. Can you still remember how we built a boat near the tutorial dungeon?"

"I do remember… Wasn't it just a small boat back then? Wait, it can't even be called a boat." I pointed out.

"Yeah. I also didn't expect it to become so big. I borrowed a large underground cathedral in Lindel, and I built it there. For some reason, it kept on getting bigger and bigger. Ah, our Ah-Young helped me, and she was a huge help," said Park Deok-Gu.

"But still…"

"You have no idea how much money I poured into building that ship," he continued.

'Of course, I don't, you pig.'

"Miss Jung-Yeon helped me out in many ways, and she took care of the finer details. I'm sure you'll be surprised once you discover the functions we've installed in that boat as well as its facilities," he added.

'You're right, damn it. I understand

Yoo Ah-Young was the Sacred Democratic Country's best blacksmith, while Hwang Jung-Yeon was an unrivaled magic scholar.

Park Deok-Gu was clearly a boat expert, and he had poured everything he had into building that ship, so it wasn't strange that they ended up creating a masterpiece.

[Checking the information of the Legendary item, Nice Boat.]

[Nice Boat - Legendary]

[It is a masterpiece of the century created by the Blacksmith of Steel, a magic scholar, and the Shield of Faith. This ship was created with dragon bones, demon bones, magic beast leather, and light magic. This is a precious and special work of art that is not just a means of transportation. Each and every material is imbued with magic, and they are strong enough to endure tempestuous winds and massive waves. Its Endurance is high enough to withstand a Dragon Breath, and it provides buffs and vitality to the crew members. It can submerge for a certain period of time, and…]

I didn't need to read the entire description because Park Deok-Gu had indeed created something great. I could see that he used Salit, demon corpses, and even Dialugia's scales and bones as materials, along with many high-quality catalysts and items. It wasn't strange that it became such a powerful item, but my jaw still dropped at its absurdity. Who wouldn't be surprised? The creators were definitely satisfied with it.

"When Lindel got destroyed, I honestly thought the ship got destroyed as well. I'm glad that it was still intact," Yoo Ah-Young said.

'Ah-Young, damn it. It says that it was created to withstand a dragon's Breath. It's covered with magic beasts' leather, and it's stored underground, so it'll naturally be safe.'

"It was still incomplete and wasn't even considered an item back then. When you woke up, Mr. Deok-Gu started working on it, and he eventually finished it. He said he wanted to finish it before we went to Mirror Lake," Hwang Jung-Yeon said.

"I honestly didn't do much. We were able to complete this thanks to you, Miss Jung-Yeon. If we hadn't used your magic to build the shipyard, it would have been impossible to build a ship that big," Park Deok-Gu chimed in.

"Well, you worked hard as well. Sub Guild Master, you have no idea how meticulous he was even when he just had to hammer a single nail," Hwang Jung-Yeon informed me.

'Okay, I get it. Stop showing off your boyfriend.'

"Wow…" I gasped.

"With this, we can sail on any sea or lake. Actually…"

'It's actually not something you'd place on a lake.'

"I felt like it grew too big to be considered just a product of a hobby, but I started liking it once it was done. At first, I was just going to let you and noonim ride it, but it somehow ended up looking like that," he explained.

Ahn Ki-Mo, Park Deok-Gu's friend and partner, joined the process.

"I'm sure we're the only guild in the Sacred Democratic Country with a ship. I heard a few nations under the developed Union of Kingdoms don't even have ships like this. I heard you received calls from a few shipbuilders and magazines… Is that true?"

"I did, but I can't share the Blue Guild's assets just like that. Except for an art magazine that was interested in the design, I declined the remaining calls. There were shipbuilders and people asking me to sell it to them, but it's like my baby, so I didn't want to sell it," he replied.

"You would have been rich…" Kim Ye-Ri commented.

“She’s right. To be honest, the item is priceless, so it’s going to be hard to find the right price to sell it, and—”

“*Ahem!* I have already decided on this ship’s owner,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“…”

“…”

“I built it to give Ha-Yan noonim and hyung-nim a ride. That had always been my goal, so I decided to give it to them,” Park Deok-Gu explained.

As always, Jung Ha-Yan was glued to me like a cicada stuck to a tree, and she immediately reacted to Park Deok-Gu’s words. Her eyes widened as rabbit eyes, and she grinned.

However, her grin felt ominous for some reason.

“To be honest… *Ahem*… I wasn’t planning on telling you like this, but since everyone is here, I thought it’s best to tell you here. Here’s the master key, hyung-nim,” Park Deok-Gu announced.

“*Ah*, yeah… thanks,” I mumbled.

“I’m sure you’re a bit dissatisfied that you’re not alone with noonim for the ship’s maiden voyage, but you should ride it often with noonim whenever you’re free in the future,” he suggested.

Jung Ha-Yan nodded more aggressively than me and muttered, “W-We can use it for our h-honeymoon. We can go far away.”

‘You can use Teleport… ’’

“Clap, everyone! Clap!” Park Deok-Gu shouted.

“Congratulations, Sub Guild Master.”

“C-Congratulations, Miss Jung Ha-Yan.”

“Congratulations, Mr. Ki-Young.”

Lee Chang-Ryeol, the assassin, Han Sora, the black mage, and even Kim Hyun-Sung started clapping in that order. The others reacted the same. I knew this would happen, but they seemed surprised by Park Deok-Gu's big decision. I wasn't sure why Kim Hyun-Sung looked as if he could do better, but he still seemed happy overall.

Honestly, it had been a while since we gathered, talked, and laughed with each other. I could still remember that we had spent many days like this whenever we were capturing a dungeon.

We would set up a large camp, create a bonfire, exchange many conversations, and enjoy each other's company with a camping vibe. It was true that we no longer had the luxury to do that because of the guild's expansion, so no one was frowning right now.

Elena and Sun Hee-Young were playing chess on the table in the carriage, while Lee Chang-Ryeol was reading in a corner like always.

Han Sora was also enjoying a board game with Ahn Ki-Mo and Kim Ye-Ri while sitting as far away as possible from Jung Ha-Yan.

Kim Hyun-Sung and Jo Hye-Jin were drinking wine in the minibar while laughing together. It had been a while since we relaxed like this, and I couldn't help but smile at the Nice Boat that Park Deok-Gu gifted to me. It felt like we had gathered at a neighborhood pub and were spending time in our own way.

'It's peaceful.'

I did have a useless thought that perhaps this was the calm before the storm, but it was really fun. The scenery outside the window was beautiful, and it was fun to be with people whom I could relax with.

The carriage wasn't moving that fast, but we were getting close to the city that Baron Nabot––no, Senator Nabot was managing. The thought of reaching our destination soon made everyone excited.

Even Jo Hye-Jin was excited, which was unlike her.

The conversation changed, and we ended up talking about Nice Boat again because we were approaching our destination.

It was the hottest topic today, so it wasn't that they were talking about it again, but it seemed like there were others—aside from the three creators—who were interested in it.

The icebreaker this time was the chatterbox—Ahn Ki-Mo.

"*Hm*, It'll be great to go to the ocean with that ship if there's a chance."

"It kind of makes me sad as well, but I'm sure Mirror Lake isn't all that different. It's pretty big, so people often mistake it for an ocean…"

"Still, I think it'll be more fun to enjoy the sea breeze. I do get seasick, so I'm not really that sad about it. Anyway, I had this dream while I was still young, and it's about becoming a sailor fighting against the harsh waves of the boundless ocean or becoming a pirate with no destination…

"There aren't that many undiscovered places or islands here, so I don't think going on an adventurous sail will be productive, but…" Ahn Ki-Mo trailed off.

"*Hm…*"

"If I could, I'd like to use this ship to enter a dungeon," he continued.

"Can we do that?" Park Deok- Gu asked.

"I've heard about how a few dungeons could change locations on the map. The Garden of Horror in the Blue Guild's journal was that kind of a dungeon. Apparently, a submerged dungeon was discovered just a few years ago," said Ahn Ki-Mo.

"That's crazy," remarked Park Deok-Gu.

"It took them many lives and certain items as well as half a year to conquer that dungeon, but with that ship, we should be able to conquer a dungeon like that, right? I think we might even discover a similar dungeon at Mirror Lake," said Ahn Ki-Mo.

"That's nice and all, but we're on vacation. And Mirror Lake is frequented by tourists and adventurers, so it doesn't make sense that we'll discover a dungeon there. Anyway, I'm sure hyung-nim will take you out to the sea in the future, Ki-Mo," Park Deok-Gu said.

"*Hahaha*, yeah, what I had said was pretty absurd. I'm looking forward to it, though, Sub Guild Master," Ahn Ki-Mo chuckled.

'That pig actually said something reasonable for once.'

I couldn't help but be curious about how he managed to make a reasonable statement.

In addition, his serious expression when he spoke didn't suit him as well.

'Ahn Ki-Mo… he really knows how to brag about his dreams.'

A pirate and going on a sailing adventure, seriously? Kim Ye-Ri looked as if she was looking forward to it, but the majority of the adults looked as if they couldn't understand Ahn Ki-Mo's dreams.

An undiscovered dungeon in Mirror Lake? I smirked because his idea sounded adorable, which betrayed his sleazy appearance.

However, my mind changed a few hours later.

"Hyung-nim, I think we're in a dungeon…" Park Deok-Gu said.

"…"

"…" Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he wasn't aware of it as well.

CHAPTER 534
HIDDEN PIECE (1)

The incident happened a few hours later, and a lot of things happened right after we reached Mirror Lake. It had been a while since we went on a group vacation, the guild members were more energetic than usual.

After reaching the city and unpacking our luggage, we ate together to relieve the exhaustion during the carriage ride.

Mirror Salmon, the city's specialty, was pretty good. I was a picky eater, but I managed to finish two servings. Park Deok-Gu and Ahn Ki-Mo's plates were stacked quite high, and Elena kept on gasping in shock whenever she took a bite.

'Well, it really is that good.'

We hadn't really done anything yet, but it already felt like we were actually on vacation. We had high expectations of Mirror Lake.

"I'm really looking forward to it. A-Are you looking forward to it as well, O-oppa?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"Yeah. I thought we'd immediately see the lake as soon as we arrived, but I guess that wasn't the case," I replied.

"They intentionally reserved a restaurant that's a bit far from the lake so that we'll look forward to seeing the Lake. I'm sure it'll be great. Don't you think so, Oppa?" she asked.

"I'm sure you'll really enjoy it, Sub Guild Master. I'm not usually the one to say something like this, but it's really romantic," Hwang Jung-Yeon chimed in.

"…?"

"Why do you look so surprised, hyung-nim? Miss Jung-Yeon and I had visited this place before for a field survey. Anyway, it's best if we get up quickly if we're done

eating. Mirror Lake is the prettiest during this hour," Park Deok-Gu suggested.

"There's a separate entrance, but the ship Mr. Deok-Gu brought is too big, so we probably can't go that way. The carriage is probably waiting there already, so we can just walk there slowly. Let's go. You too, Guild Master," said Hwang Jung-Yeon.

"*Ah…* got it," Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

Kim Hyun-Sung stood up awkwardly, and I smiled in satisfaction because he was acting like a child on a package tour. He was acting his age, and Jo Hye-Jin next to him seemed really excited as well.

"You look like you're enjoying yourself." I pointed out.

"Please don't be ridiculous, Sub Guild Master," Jo Hye-Jin replied.

Anyway, the guild members, including Kim Hyun-Sung, started walking happily, and I was satisfied with the Park Deok-Gu tour so far. Traveling with a full stomach meant that one could enjoy the views properly, and the hiking trail to the main tourist spot was decorated beautifully as well. It was one of the factors that contributed greatly to the great atmosphere. I also thought that the excellent atmosphere was the main reason I was so satisfied with the Park Deok-Gu tour so far.

We walked for a few minutes, and we finally saw Mirror Lake.

It was a scene that made me gasp. I thought it would be kind of disappointing, but it was a sight worthy of being called the Sacred Democratic Country's number-one tourist spot.

The lake seemed as massive as the ocean, and the scenery itself made it too beautiful to be called a mere lake. The Mirror Lake was aptly named because not only did it reflect the sky, but it also looked like someone sprinkled light particles all over the place.

The Mirror Lake looked like someone had emblazoned jewels on it.

Everyone stared in awe and expressed their appreciation with their jaws on the ground.

"It's pretty."

Even Kim Ye-Ri exclaimed, and she had never been the type to express her emotions.

“I feel like I’m getting cleansed… like the sins and fear deep inside of me are disappearing,” exclaimed Han Sora. She was a crybaby who needed cleansing.

“I thought I’d seen many interesting things after arriving on this continent, but this scenery is the best,” said Yoo Ah-Young.

“How is it sparkling like that?” Lee Chang-Ryeol asked.

“We have no explanations so far, Mr. Chang-Ryeol,” said Hwang Jung-Yeon, Park Deok-Gu’s girl.

“What do you mean?” Lee Chang-Ryeol asked.

“It’s like I said. We have no idea how it’s like a mirror and how there are light particles floating about it. Scholars are still trying their best to find out why, but who knows? Honestly, I don’t want to know why because it’s more romantic that way,” she answered.

“I didn’t see any salmon farms nearby, so I wonder how salmon live here,” said Lee Chang-Ryeol.

‘What’s the point of nitpicking? As long as it looks pretty in my eyes, that’s all that matters. Don’t you agree, noonim?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“*Ah…* Yes, it’s really pretty,” Jung Ha-Yan answered.

It seemed that Jung Ha-Yan could still get affected by her emotions because she repeatedly nodded in response to Park Deok-Gu’s words and hugged my arm.

Elena glanced at us.

Jung Ha-Yan was probably expecting me to do something romantic, but I was embarrassed to do something like that in front of everyone.

“This is just the beginning. It’s going to be even more ridiculous,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“I think you mean spectacular,” I corrected.

“Same thing. Why are you ruining the nice atmosphere, hyung-nim…? Anyway, get on, everyone. Hurry up. We’re going to see it up close. Seeing it from Nice Boat will definitely be a lot better. Hurry up, bro,” he urged.

“Yes, I’m coming,” Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

Kim Hyun-Sung glanced at me before taking the lead, and we soon got onto the ship.

I finally saw the interior of the ship. It wasn’t that extravagant, but I could tell the effort that Park Deok-Gu exerted into building the ship. The amenities were luxurious, and it seemed that he focused on that more compared to the overall interior.

The massive ship started heading toward the lake, and Kim Ye-Ri started yelling in excitement. Ahn Ki-Mo’s satisfied look was a plus. There was definitely a difference between looking at it from afar and up close. It felt like I was flying while riding the ship. If I were to talk about its mysteriousness, it was on the same level as the World Tree.

I still couldn’t see the edge of the lake. The water swayed as waves were created when the large ship sailed slowly on it. The sky seemed to be moving as well, along with the particles of light. Jung Ha-Yan definitely saw a scene from a movie because she stood at the very bow of the ship and spread her arms while staring at the lake.

“O-Oppa… P-Please hold me from behind,” Jung Ha-Yan requested.

‘Please don’t do this… Ha-Yan.’

However, I wasn’t mean enough not to play along in a situation like this, so I grabbed Jung Ha-Yan’s waist, and she giggled in response. Sun Hee-Young and Elena stood behind us, waiting for their turns, while Kim Hyun-Sung was staring at us in satisfaction.

Jo Hye-Jin looked like she wanted to do what we were doing, but her *lover* wasn’t interested, so it seemed that today would be another defeat for her.

Everyone cheered and gasped at the scenery. Honestly, it wasn’t *that* great, but the cheers made Park Deok-Gu feel even more satisfied.

Rumble!

There was a rumbling noise, and the ship slowly sank. I looked at Park Deok-Gu doubtfully, but he only nodded in response, telling me not to worry.

The ship was soon fully submerged, and we saw a never-before-seen scenery.

'I can't believe that it can submerge. Shit… '

The reactions of the guild members made me think that this scenery could cleanse even low-ranking demons. I honestly didn't think that the lake would be this dazzling underwater. In other words, the lake wasn't just acting like a mirror.

There was an inexplicable natural phenomenon that couldn't be explained by earthly common sense at work here.

Jo Hye-Jin unknowingly extended her hand out when a particle of light floated over to her. I wasn't sure if the particle of light was holy power or mana, but I started thinking that perhaps I could use it as a catalyst.

"How did you do this…?" I asked.

"Well, I called over a few mages. This is the first time we're using this, and it's great that it's working properly," Park Deok-Gu replied.

"This is definitely a better view," I commented.

"Did the view manage to cleanse you even just a bit?" he asked.

'It's not that great.'

"Do you feel the darkness inside you disappearing or something?" he questioned.

"Thanks, Deok-Gu," I said.

"*Ahem*, I've been waiting for you to say that to me, but I feel happier hearing it from you. Ah, look! There's a school of salmon!" he pointed out.

"It's pretty," I said.

"I can tell that you're happy. Noonim seems to be enjoying it as well," he commented.

“It feels like I’m inside a blue-and-white universe,” Jung Ha-Yan chimed in.

“Oooh! That was poetic! Let’s follow the salmon and see where they’re going,” he suggested.

“Is that okay?” I asked.

“Don’t worry, what are you so worried about? Ha-Yan noonim is even here. Don’t worry about anything and just enjoy the tour, hyung-nim. You can look forward to tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, too. Let’s gooo!” he shouted.

‘This pig is having too much fun.’

I couldn’t help but feel slightly anxious because Park Deok-Gu’s happiness meant that misfortune was soon to follow. However, the scenery truly helped me forget my trivial worries.

Even Han Sora cried at the scenery…

I couldn’t really understand why she was crying because we were just looking at nature, but she looked as if she had been redeemed.

‘Well, she did help summon a demon… ’

Jung Ha-Yan seemed to be swimming in guilt, so I looked away and about absolving her.

Park Deok-Gu got more and more excited because the audience’s reaction got better and better. I couldn’t help but laugh because he was steering the Nice Boat in a funny way. Everyone was enjoying the relaxing time in their own way, but Kim Hyun-Sung was probably the happiest.

It felt like his happiness was directly proportional to my happiness.

Honestly, I started getting tired after twenty minutes because they started to look the same in my eyes. However, I made sure to reveal various reactions for Kim Hyun-Sung to see. After all, he had been having a difficult time recently.

‘I definitely need to do some lip service.’

Their goals had always been to take care of my mental health and make me have fun, so I wanted them to feel like they had achieved their goals. Kim Hyun-Sung was overjoyed at my fake reactions, and he looked like all this was because of him.

I felt like once we were done here, he would definitely ask me again and again if I had enjoyed the trip.

"*Wow!*"

'He's having the time of his life.'

"*Ah!*"

'This is really tiring, Hyun-Sung.'

"It's really amazing."

'People will think that you're the one who created Mirror Lake, man.'

"I think it's even better… because it's so big."

'As long as you're happy, Hyun-Sung.'

"All right, we're heading up now, so hold on tight!" Park Deok-Gu exclaimed.

It was finally over. I started thinking about what kind of reaction I should show once we surfaced, but…

'Where are we…?'

We arrived at a place we had never seen before, rather than Mirror Lake.

"Damn it… What's going on?"

My jaw dropped the moment when I saw a wormhole in a huge wave.

"Set sail! Set sail! Set saiiiiil!!!" I screamed.

CHAPTER 535
HIDDEN PIECE (2)

Finding out exactly what was happening was an issue for later. The mirror seemed like it flipped, and the scenery was confusing. However, I had no time to process the sudden change because I had to figure out what we should do right now.

My brain switched to survival mode. However, a huge wave had already surrounded us before I could even think of anything.

“Magic! Magic!” I shouted.

Jung Ha-Yan quickly cast a spell, but it wasn’t enough to block the huge wave. The wave smashed into the ship and sent the guild members flying away, but they managed to avoid getting swept away by holding onto the railings or a pillar. Unfortunately, I was too weak to withstand such a huge impact. Before I knew it, I was already in mid-air, and I was instantly disappointed in my weak body.

‘Damn it!’

I wanted to cast a spell by snapping my fingers, but unlike my calm mind, I was flailing around, trying to survive. A smaller wave struck my arm, and I plummeted rapidly to the ground.

“Oppa!” Jung Ha-Yan screamed, and I felt someone holding my hand.

I turned and saw Kim Hyun-Sung holding my hand tightly.

“Are you okay?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“Mr. Hyun-Sung?” I questioned.

I couldn’t be safer in the regressor’s comfortable arms, but…

‘What about the others?’

The situation wasn't as bad as I thought.

Lee Chang-Ryeol grabbed Han Sora and Elena after they bounced off the wall, and Park Deok-Gu was holding Hwang Jung-Yeon. The vanguards like Yoo Ah-Young, Kim Ye-Ri, and Jo Hye-Jin were safe, so people with high stats were strong enough to withstand the impact.

Unfortunately, the rearguards weren't as strong as the vanguards.

I looked around and found Sun Hee-Young in mid-air. I thought we would be able to save her, but a huge wave smashed into her and swallowed her whole. The members started screaming, and I activated Mind's Eye to look inside the wave.

I saw Sun Hee-Young struggling while being swept away.

I snapped my fingers while in Kim Hyun-Sung's arms, and a large dragon tail manifested. Hwang Jung-Yeon and Elena were worried that the tail would break apart because they cast a strengthening spell on the tail.

Meanwhile, Sun Hee-Young was getting further and further away from the ship.

'Reach her! Damn it, reach her!'

Kim Ye-Ri decisively got on the tail and started running after Sun Hee-Young, but the wave was faster than Kim Ye-Ri. To make matters worse, Kim Ye-Ri was struck by another wave, causing her to stab her dagger into the tail.

Kim Ye-Ri was now in danger.

While I was thinking about the worst-case scenario, a stroke of luck saved Sun Hee-Young's life. A wave from the opposite direction pushed Sun Hee-Young toward us.

'Nice! Nice!'

I clenched my fist, and the dragon trail grabbed Sun Hee-Young before bringing her back to us. However, just as I thought that everything was over, another huge wave descended toward the ship.

"Stop it! Stop it!"

"*Eeeeeeek!*"

Jung Ha-Yan cast another spell, and she cast the same spell she used in Laios.

Booooooom!

There was a loud noise, and the wave that looked like it was going to swallow us whole was compressed before disappearing into nothingness.

"Nice, Jung Ha-Yan! Niiiice!"

My surprise only lasted for a moment because Han Sora cast a spell, and a black chain wrapped around me. She didn't cast this spell to tie me up. It was a spell that would prevent me from being sent flying away. As expected, I felt heavy, and I felt like a magnet stuck to the ship.

I raised a thumbs-up to the greatness of magic.

Meanwhile, the dragon tail delivered the unconscious Sun Hee-Young inside the ship. It seemed that she ended up swallowing some water, and Elena was on her way toward her. Unfortunately, it was difficult to move aboard a rocking ship.

To make things worse, holy power couldn't really heal Sun Hee-Young.

"Ye-Ri, hold Miss Hee-Young tightly. I think it's best if you prepare for the incoming waves, Mr. Hyun-Sung. That should be enough," Elena instructed.

"But…"

"Hurry," she urged.

"…"

"I understand," he said.

I was certain that our lovely regressor was strong enough to handle these waves.

This was just my assumption, but I had a feeling that we had to enter that wormhole because our ship would eventually get destroyed if we decided to stay here.

'Shit… at least we have this ship.'

I was sure that if we had been using Park Deok-Gu's tiny boat rather than this Nice Boat, the guild members would have already been swallowed by the waves and would have had no choice but to wait for their demise.

I started moving while having many useless thoughts. I felt bad because she hadn't consented to this, but I started performing chest compressions on Sun Hee-Young.

I wasn't really sure if I was doing it correctly, but my memories were telling me that I was doing it properly.

The ship was trembling, but I was able to maintain my balance.

I secured Sun Hee-Young's airway and placed my mouth over hers before blowing air into her mouth.

Kim Ye-Ri anxiously grabbed Sun Hee-Young's hand. I felt like Sun Hee-Young was responding. Water was coming out of her mouth, but she was still unconscious.

I decided to perform another round of chest compressions before breathing into her mouth, and she eventually started coughing up blood.

I ended her treatment with a bit of my holy power.

Once she woke up, she would be able to treat herself, so I decided to end her treatment right there and then. I was worried that Jung Ha-Yan would throw herself into the waves after seeing what I had done to Sun Hee-Young, but fortunately, she wasn't watching.

I wasn't sure if the goddesses had helped me, but the waves had stopped smashing into our ship at some point. However, the ship was still trembling, so Jung Ha-Yan had to be ready to dissolve any incoming waves.

'Damn it, nature really is… mighty.'

There was a reason magic took form in the shape of nature.

Anyway, our current situation was so ridiculous that I felt like someone had cast a Mythic-rank spell on us. If those waves crashed into the continent rather than into

our ship, there would be a catastrophic loss of life. It would be an understatement to say that it would be a horrible sight. Recovery would be impossible. Was this what the world would look like during Judgment Day?

I would never know what Noah felt while drifting around the world in his Ark, but it wouldn't take a genius to deduce that he was definitely anxious.

We were surrounded by waves. The rearguards blocked the massive ones, but anyone could deduce that we would soon be overrun by these waves. Kim Hyun-Sung split the waves into two with his sword, but there was no way he could do that for a long time.

"Park Deok-Gu, grab the handle!" I instructed.

"*Uh? Huh?!*"

"Grab the ship wheel! The handle!" I shouted.

"*Ah… Ah!* I got it!" Park Deok-Gu yelled.

Park Deok-Gu quickly grabbed the ship wheel. We should dodge the waves from the front and ride the wind. Anyway, the priority was reaching that wormhole and entering it.

"Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo, the sail! Spread the sails! The sails!" I ordered.

"*Bleeeeck!*"

'Shit… Pirate, my ass!'

"*Bleeck!* Yes… sir! *Bleeck!* Wait… *Bleeck!*"

'Sea adventure, my ass!'

"I'll take care of it."

'All right, Chang-Ryeol. You take care of it, damn it.'

Lee Chang-Ryeol took over and spread the sails, and the large ship sailed through the harsh waters. I wasn't sure why, but the ship instantly started moving. However, it

was listing slightly, and it seemed that we had been riding the ship with a list.

'Where the hell are we?'

I felt a bit relieved and started looking around, but there were waves everywhere, which made all this a bit unrealistic. I wasn't sure how the wave above us wasn't falling. The ship was moving to the left, right, and upward to avoid the waves, but it didn't seem strange for some reason.

It felt like we were in a space that completely ignored the natural laws of the world.

The current situation was so unrealistic that it made me think of Incept-something—a movie I had watched a long time ago. Naturally, I got worried that there was a dimensional mana or rift-something floating around somewhere here.

"Hold on tight! Hold on tight!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

Boom!

There was a loud noise, and we staggered. I was sure that Park Deok-Gu had no idea what he was doing right now, but I could see him withstanding the waves while moving the ship toward the wormhole.

It seemed that he had practiced sailing somewhere because his control of the ship was impressive, but I didn't have the luxury of observing him more closely.

Even if we were on a stable trajectory, we couldn't let our guard down. Jung Ha-Yan, Kim Hyun-Sung, and Jo Hye-Jin did their best on the sides to stop the waves, the mages continued using their magic, and Elena continued pouring out her holy power. That's when I saw an even more unrealistic thing.

The ship was relatively *stable*, but we couldn't let our guard down. Jung Ha-Yan, Kim Hyun-Sung, and Jo Hye-Jin did their best to stop the waves, the rearguard continued casting their spells while Elena poured out as much holy power as she could.

- *Wieeeeeoooooo!*

Splash!

A creature that seemed like a massive whale emerged from a wave.

“What… was that?”

“This is crazy…”

I didn’t manage to check it properly with Mind’s Eye because it appeared out of the blue. It was a creature that was at least ten times larger than Dialugia, and it didn’t seem to care about our tiny but nice boat.

The creature *flew* toward another wave.

Boooooooooooom!

The impact sent a large amount of water toward the ship.

A large shield was protecting the ship, and it deflected the force behind the water.

Unfortunately, it seemed that the water’s weight couldn’t be ignored because we started sinking. The good thing was that the ship instantly came back up, and everyone was rendered speechless and could only look at each other blankly.

“…”

“…”

I understood why they reacted that way because they definitely saw the same thing I did when we sank just now.

“Mister, did you see it?” Kim Ye-Ri asked.

“Yeah… I did,” I replied.

I stared at Kim Ye-Ri while thinking that we had ended up arriving at a strange place.

Meanwhile, the Nice Boat finally entered the wormhole.

The system’s voice echoed.

~

[You have entered a Mythic-rank dungeon.]

~

It would be an understatement to say that we were in a bad situation.

'Shit... '

CHAPTER 536
HIDDEN PIECE (3)

The ship was enveloped in a deafening silence after exiting the wormhole. We knew that what had happened was real, but it felt surreal. We managed to escape the massive tsunami that was capable of devouring an entire city, and we saw the clear skies and an open sea.

However, I had no idea what to do.

"Hyung-nim, I think we entered a dungeon…" said Park Deok-Gu.

"…"

"…"

'I know, you pig.'

The issue here was our location. Kim Hyun-Sung looked like even he had no idea where we were. Of course, I wasn't really expecting him to know everything, even though he was a regressor.

However, we were in a Mythic-rank dungeon. I expected him to know every Mythic-rank dungeon, so I frowned when I saw his look of confusion.

It seemed that no one had discovered this Mythic-rank dungeon in his past life because it would have been difficult for this dungeon to avoid hiding from the public's eyes.

'No, even if it got discovered… '

The finders most likely died without getting inside the dungeon and receiving the system notification. After all, we would have died as well if it hadn't been for Park Deok-Gu's Nice Boat.

'Everything is falling into place. This pig… '

Park Deok-Gu was the reason we entered the dungeon safely. I glanced at Park Deok-Gu and saw that he was looking at me with guilty eyes. He looked truly apologetic, and he was showing that this wasn't what he wanted at all.

He was even on the verge of crying. It was an incongruous sight considering his large frame, but his chin was trembling as he held back his tears. I was sure he felt bad because the nice vacation had suddenly become a survival game.

This wasn't really his fault, but I was sure that he was going to blame himself for it.

I checked his status window and noticed that his Luck was below average.

'Shit. How is he so unlucky?'

It could be said that we had discovered this dungeon accidentally, but after seeing Park Deok-Gu's Luck, I couldn't help but think that it was inevitable. I actually felt relieved that we weren't forced into this dungeon by Benigoa, Elune, or Lauren.

I couldn't contact those incompetent gods right now, and I thought that they decided to abandon me. Of course, that particular thought didn't really make sense because they wouldn't have sent Kim Hyun-Sung with me if they had decided to abandon me.

Park Deok-Gu started talking once again.

"I-I'm—" he said.

"It's fine, Deok-Gu. It's not your fault," I interrupted.

It was better to interrupt him so he wouldn't be more discouraged.

"But."

"Don't make me repeat myself. It's not your fault. Our situation will not change even if we start playing the blame game. The top priority is to figure out what is going on," I told him.

"Still…"

"Do we have any food?" I asked.

“We should have some on the ship,” he replied.

“What about water?” I asked.

“Well, we should have some water, too… The ship is stocked with food and water,” he answered.

‘He sure prepared a lot. Was he planning on spending several months at Mirror Lake?’

The surroundings got even quieter while I was questioning Park Deok-Gu.

I glanced at Hwang Jung-Yeon because her knowledge and memory should be helpful.

“I’m not sure, but…” Hwang Jung-Yeon paused.

“Yes?”

“I think we’re at the back of Mirror Lake,” she continued.

“…”

“It’s just an assumption, so take it with a grain of salt. It makes sense if we think that we’re in the world behind Mirror Lake. I believe this is like a hidden piece that’s often mentioned in video games,” she explained.

“Hidden piece?” I asked.

“Yes. The designer of the continent must have intentionally built this place. I’m not sure why it has remained undiscovered until now, but I think someone has led us here. The timing is too perfect for this to be a mere coincidence,” she added.

“Who?” I questioned.

“I don’t know… It could be Goddess Benigoa, a demon, or a being that is above all of them. I’m also not sure about this, but I think the reason there are salmon here is that Mirror Lake isn’t really a lake but a river. A river that connects Mirror Lake and our current location to each other… the salmon are swimming against the current of the river. I think Mirror Lake looks like a river to them. That’s probably why… the salmon tasted delicious,” she continued.

“That makes sense… a river that connects worlds…” I muttered.

“Everyone saw what was inside that wormhole, right?” she asked.

Everyone nodded with a look of disbelief. I could totally understand their feelings because they weren’t like me, who was aware of how this world was operating. They were just ordinary people, so it wasn’t strange that they were stupefied.

Jung Ha-Yan was smiling while staring at me, but it was because she didn’t really care about how the world was operating. However, Han Sora and Ahn Ki-Mo stood frozen in a daze.

What we saw in the wormhole was…

“A massive expanse…”

We saw many shining planets and their inhabitants. We saw floating beams of light and giant beings that we couldn’t quite describe. I had no idea why we saw those scenes, but the guild members saw them as well.

There was also a chance that Earth was among those shining planets.

That was all the information I could tell from a scholar’s point of view.

Kim Hyun-Sung finally spoke, and the words he told everyone were within my expectations.

“I’m sure you saw the people living on those planets. They could also be beings drifting through space. We drifted apart while we were within the wormhole, so I’m sure we saw different scenes. If you don’t mind, I would like to hear what you saw in the wormhole.”

Kim Ye-Ri spoke first. “I saw someone who looked like Ha-Yan unni.”

“What?”

“Yes, she resembled Ha-Yan unni. I don’t remember the details, but I think she had longer hair and her age… Ah, my head hurts…” Kim Ye-Ri muttered.

The next one who spoke was Park Deok-Gu.

“I-I… saw a monster we saw at the Rift Museum,” he said.

“The Ancient God?” I asked.

“No, it’s the horned green-skinned monster surrounded by weapons, and it was alive! The scariest part was…” Park Deok-Gu trailed off.

“What is it?” I asked.

“It’d be nice if I were just seeing things, but I think our eyes met,” he answered.

‘This pig is talking nonsense again.’

“It’s true. I think our eyes met, and… even though it was only for a moment, I think it looked at Hyun-Sung bro and you, hyung-nim. I was so scared because it looked like it was enjoying our predicament. Really,” he added.

The next one who spoke was Ahn Ki-Mo.

“It was an ordinary scene. I just saw a family living an ordinary life,” he said.

The others told us what they saw, but what they saw didn’t really stand out to me.

“I… saw a place that looked like Earth, and I think I saw someone who looked like the sub guild master. She looked young, and she was a woman… a strange woman…”

“I do have a younger sister. It would be funny if the woman you saw was my sister. What was she doing?” I asked.

“…”

‘Damn it… What was she doing?’

“Actually, you don’t have to tell me. Anyway—”

“She was slapping someone,” Jo Hye-Jin replied.

“What?”

“How… should I say it? She was hitting… an older man’s cheek with what looked like

a wad of money. She even stepped on his head with her heels. The man looked like she was begging, but the woman only grinned at him like a madwoman—"

"You can stop now. It must be… someone I don't know," I said, interrupting her.

It was Lee Yul-Ha.

'That crazy bitch… '

I wasn't certain, but I had a feeling that it was her. For now, I decided to remain quiet because her well-being wasn't important right now. The fact that I was able to confirm that she was fine was enough.

Thankfully, the guild members were no longer interested in Lee Yul-Ha. Jo Hye-Jin seemed certain that she was my younger sister, but the others didn't think that she was my sister because she was completely different from me. They looked as if they wanted to focus on other things rather than my family.

Han Sora started talking, "Earth?"

"I'm not certain. I just had that kind of feeling… since there are a lot of planets that resemble Earth. But…" Jo Hye-Jin trailed off.

"If… If what Miss Jo Hye-Jin saw was really Earth… does that mean… we… can… return to Earth? Like Jung-Yeon unni mentioned earlier, if the wormhole in the wave was really a river that connects worlds, doesn't that mean that we can return to Earth?" Han Sora asked.

No, Benigoa had told me that those who were unfortunate enough to get summoned here had been abandoned. In other words, ordinary methods weren't enough if one wanted to return to where they had come from.

"I think it's impossible," Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

"What?"

"We have witnessed something inconceivable through the wormhole, but it doesn't mean that we can use it to return to Earth. It's out of the question for us to return by riding on the ocean of dimensions.

“Our ship and our bodies will not be able to withstand the journey, and we’re not even sure if we can even cross over after entering the ocean of dimensions, not to mention how far we have to travel to arrive at our destination.

“There are too many unanswered questions. I’m not saying that it’s truly impossible, but…” Kim Hyun-Sung trailed off.

‘He’s telling her to forget about going back.’

I couldn’t help but think that Kim Hyun-Sung was a bit too ruthless, but it was only right for people to abandon the idea of achieving something that couldn’t be achieved in the first place. It would be a waste of time to be hung up on something that couldn’t be done and waste a large amount of time as a result.

Soon, Sun Hee-Young finally woke up. Everyone turned to look at her because she actually got swallowed by that wormhole-carrying wave and had to be rescued.

“…”

“A god,” Sun Hee-Young started.

“What?”

“I think… I saw a god that was a bit different from the gods of this continent. Yes, it was a bit different…” she nodded.

Kim Hyun-Sung nervously muttered, “An outer god…”

CHAPTER 537
HIDDEN PIECE (4)

“An outer god…” Kim Hyun-Sung muttered.

“What?”

“What she saw was probably an outer god…” he added.

“How do you—”

“I remember reading it in an ancient book. Of course, I don’t know the details, but… the word just popped into my head. Did you see what it looked like?” he asked.

“No, I couldn’t really make it out… I can’t really say that it looked human, so I have no idea what I saw. It was a gigantic being that I can’t quite grasp,” Sun Hee-Young answered.

“…”

“…”

‘What the hell is an outer god? Damn it.’

I started tapping on my thigh because Kim Hyun-Sung’s words about an outer god or whatever took me aback. The wormhole was shocking enough, but to think that one of us would even witness an outer god. We were at a loss for words, but the pig of the Blue Guild seemed to have many questions because he started talking.

“Aren’t the gods in charge of this continent? What is this talk about an outer god? If they aren’t like Goddess Benigoa and Elune, what in the world did Hee-Young noonim see?”

“I really don’t know the details,” replied Kim Hyun-Sung.

“There’s too much information to process, so I have no idea what’s going on. Are you

saying that an outer god isn't like the gods that we know?" asked Park Deok-Gu.

"I think so. The ancient book said that an outer god is an outcast," replied Kim Hyun-Sung.

"An outcast?" Park Deok-Gu repeated.

"One thing is for sure—they won't be kind to us," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"That's right, Guild Master. I don't know the details, but the giant being wasn't looking at us kindly. To be exact, it didn't seem to be interested in us, but… I can't say for sure," Sun Hee-Young chimed in.

'An outcast… '

There was a high chance that Kim Hyun-Sung truly wasn't that knowledgeable about them since Altanus and Benigoa had to have restricted him from gathering a ton of information. Therefore, it wasn't strange that he wasn't aware of the situation up there.

Even if he knew about the outer gods…

'He probably won't tell us, considering our current situation.'

However, I had a general idea of what was going on, so I was suspicious about a few things. If the outer gods were truly outcasts, then…

'Perhaps they weren't assigned to this world's dimension or planets?'

It didn't make sense that the manager of the dimensions would allow a wormhole to just float around. The dimension that we were in wasn't created randomly. I wasn't sure how, but it was clear that a huge system was running things here, above, and below.

The gods were like employees of a company, and they were divided into their own departments. They would then manage their own dimensions, and they would most likely earn merit depending on how they were managing their own dimensions.

My assumptions of the continent's unknown rules were the following…

1. Influencing the continent in any way consumes holy power. Miracles, quests, and even bestowing upon a calling to someone will consume a large amount of holy power.

2. The gods will suffer a huge penalty upon getting involved with humans. Direct harm was impossible.

3. They accumulate holy power and merit from humans.

These were what I had gathered so far. The gods of the continent were managing the humans, but it was undeniable that we were the reason why the gods were alive. The humans were the gods' raison d'etre. Without humans, they wouldn't exist. Without the dimensions, there would be no environment for humans to live.

If the outer gods truly were gods that existed beyond this dimension and this continent, Kim Hyun-Sung's solemn look would make sense. After all, it would mean that the outer gods wouldn't be under the constraints that I had mentioned earlier.

There was a chance that they could directly harm humans—no, they could definitely do it. If their existence was beyond the system, they could do whatever they wanted with the humans.

"Are you saying that they're like demons?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

'They're probably different from demons.'

They were a bit different from the gods, but demons were still part of the system, so they were basically in the same position as the gods.

A demon would receive a penalty from the system upon manifesting in the real world, and the penalty would become even heavier if they did something against the rules of the system.

Unlike the gods, they could directly harm humans, but those actions had a limit as well.

There was a high chance that the so-called outer gods had no limiters at all, which made me realize something crucial.

'How are they getting holy power? Are they even wielding holy power? Or is it something different?'

I had two assumptions. They either had too much merit that they didn't have to worry about holy power or…

'They become stronger by creating chaos… '

There was a high chance that it was the latter.

'So it was those bastards… '

They were the reason Kim Hyun-Sung regressed.

'I'm sure it's them… '

And they were also the reason why Benigoa said that the gods weren't perfect.

[That's right, we're not perfect. Keep that in mind, my proud Father Lee Ki-Young. We're not perfect either. We're incomplete. We're just standing in a different position from those on the continent, but we're not that different from you. Keep that in mind.]

I felt like I finally understood why she emphasized the fact that they weren't perfect. At the time, I thought it was just an excuse to justify her trolling, but it didn't seem to be the case anymore.

I couldn't help but think that she was hinting at the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung and the continent would have to face a mythical being. It sounded like she was being delusional, but things were falling into place.

Kim Hyun-Sung's worried expression was telling me that my useless assumptions might actually be true.

'The masked scum… '

I couldn't help but be curious about the masked scum's movements in Kim Hyun-Sung's past life.

‘Was he working under the outer gods as well?’

He joined the brigade, established a contract with a demon, and spread chaos on the continent—that was the extent of my knowledge about the masked scum. If I were to assume that he had been working with the outer gods, everything would make sense.

However, I was still doubtful.

The masked scum—Demon Summoner Jin Cheong—had to have established a contract with Belial. I wasn’t sure about the other demons, but Belial was a demon that I could confidently describe as a soft-liner.

And that was why it was hard for me to understand why he had decided to work with the outer gods. Of course, it was also possible that he simply got into a contract for the sake of their own benefits.

‘No, I don’t think that’s the only reason. A contract with the outer gods is problematic… ’

After all, it would be a relationship based purely on benefits, and Belial probably understood that better than anyone.

‘I think he didn’t get into a contract with Belial… ’

I was still a bit uncomfortable, but I felt like I managed to solve some of the burning questions in my mind. Of course, I still had to confirm them for myself, but I had to set them aside and organize my thoughts.

However, I was a bit surprised to see that someone else was reading the room.

“This sounds a bit absurd, but… I can’t get rid of this feeling…” Park Deok-Gu muttered.

“What is it?” I asked.

“I’ll tell you if you promise not to laugh,” said.

“I won’t laugh, so tell me,” I said.

“Well… I’m wondering if this is the threat that Goddess Benigoa had mentioned after

the war with the Republic," he answered.

"…"

'This pig might be onto something.'

Park Deok-Gu looked a bit shocked because he thought everyone would start laughing, but everyone was staring at him with serious looks.

Kim Hyun-Sung was particularly surprised, and I could see through his thoughts.

He was probably thinking along the lines of—*what in the world is he?*

"That's…"

"It's just an assumption. I don't know what's going on, but… our hyung-nim said that everything happens for a reason. I think there's a reason we're here," he replied.

'You're the reason we're here, you pig…!'

"It's strange, right? I still don't understand how our guild was able to enter this kind of dungeon right when we arrived with this ship, but Miss Jung-Yeon said earlier that there's a chance that a transcendent being led us here," he added.

"…"

"I think they're trying to show us the enemy that we will have to fight in the future. I think that's why we were led to this dungeon. *You guys aren't strong enough, so overcome this trial and become even stronger!* Something like that…" he said.

"…"

"The thought that someone is probably watching us right now really gives me the creeps…" he added.

I actually got goosebumps as well.

It was a terrifying moment, and I was scared that Park Deok-Gu would suddenly awaken and introduce himself as Park Gu-Deok.

Some of his lucky guesses were actually right, and it made even more sense considering that I couldn't contact Benigoa or Elune here. It was possible that a transcendent being had led us here.

In other words, a transcendent being who was aware of Kim Hyun-Sung's past life had decided to interfere.

"It doesn't sound like a ridiculous assumption. Of course, I can't say that it completely makes sense, but I think it's best if we keep what you said in mind," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"So, what should we do?" he asked.

"I don't see any other options, so I think the best course of action is to conquer this dungeon. What about teleportation? Is it…" Kim Hyun-Sung trailed off.

"Y-Yes… it's i-impossible," Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

"I see. I have investigated many dungeons, but I've never heard of a Mythic-rank dungeon before. We have to be always aware that the difficulty of this dungeon cannot be compared to the difficulty of the dungeons that we have cleared before," he warned.

'I don't even want to imagine it. Damn it… '

"Mr. Ki-Young, even in the worst-case scenario, please…" he trailed off.

"*Ah*, yes. I understand," I answered.

"A dungeon quest will never be safe, so I would like the rest of you to keep in mind that you might die…"

"Yes, we're prepared, Guild Master."

"The dungeon conquests have always been difficult, but the Blue Guild managed to overcome all those trials. I'm sure that we will succeed this time as well. Don't worry too much about us; we'll manage and succeed," said Park Deok-Gu.

"Mister Deok-Gu is right. You don't have to worry about us… Everyone. Is prepared," Kim Ye-Ri chimed in.

"…"

'Of course, it's going to be difficult… '

It was a Mythic-rank dungeon, after all. Mythic-rank dungeons weren't supposed to exist on this continent.

The dungeons that the Blue Guild had conquered so far were dungeons that Kim Hyun-Sung could easily carry the Blue Guild through, but this Mythic-rank dungeon was different.

There was a high chance that some of us would die.

Everyone was saying that it was fine, but Kim Hyun-Sung looked extremely worried.

He got even more worried the more we reassured him that everything would be fine.

Silence soon descended upon us as we nervously stood around.

[Welcome to the Mythic-rank dungeon—Sea of the Abandoned Dimension. Fish out random items from the Dimensional Sea to your heart's content. However, you can only bring back one item, regardless of the item rank. Return once you're done fishing (0/1)]

"*Huh?*"

I wasn't the only one who got the message, and everyone started looking at each other.

'This is… '

"Awesome…"

"*Wow…*"

"No way…"

Trial, my ass! We were basically about to have fun fishing.

CHAPTER 538
HIDDEN PIECE (5)

'What's this?'

The situation was so ridiculous that I had no idea what to say. I was expecting a quest that would tell us to fight an extremely powerful being or ask us to solve an unsolvable puzzle. I didn't expect that it would give us such an easy quest.

Unlike me, the majority of the guild members were overjoyed. Han Sora was particularly relieved and happy. I even saw her chuckling to herself.

Who wouldn't like free stuff? It was often said that the fruit of hard work tasted the best, but in my opinion, the best-tasting fruits were free fruits.

'How sweet.'

I liked free things more than anyone here.

"I-I'm glad."

The lovely regressor seemed like he didn't expect it at all because he looked half surprised and half in doubt. His reaction wasn't strange. Who would believe it when they were told that they could leave with an item without any conditions? It was natural to think that there was a trap, but the system wouldn't lie. We simply had to follow the system. There was no reason nor need to do anything else.

'This can really be considered a hidden piece.'

A transcendent being decided to hide a few things on this continent, and the Blue Guild ended up discovering them. I could still remember how the hidden piece of Mirror Lake remained undiscovered in our past life, so my suspicions disappeared.

"D-do we really just have to go fishing? Is that really all we have to do?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

“Yes. I think we can continue with the quest until there’s a change. We’ll either take turns standing guard or be prepared for unknown situations… Yeah, let’s do that…” Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

“Are you saying that the system may have lied to us?” he asked.

“No, but…”

“But we still have to be wary about fishing here. Mr. Hyun-Sung is right. Anyway, let’s start moving. I don’t know how much time we have left, so we should go ahead and find as many items as we can,” I suggested.

“Okay, Sub Guild Master.”

“If the outer god that Miss Hee-Young had seen is a threat to the continent, it is all the more important for us to get as many items as we can. Of course, we can’t say for sure, but there’s no harm in being prepared,” I explained.

“Yeah, I’m not sure why, but I just got this gut feeling. There were too many red flags to say that our arrival here was a coincidence,” he added.

‘You’re the most suspicious one here, man.’

I had no idea how we ended up here, but I knew what to do.

‘I need to get the most valuable item here.’

We had to ignore the Semi-Mythic and Legendary items to fish as many Mythic-rank items as we could possibly fish out of the dimensional sea. Growth items and items with no clear usage conditions would be ignored, and we were planning on deciding who would own what item before we started fishing for items.

I felt bad for saying this, but giving Park Deok-Gu a Mythic-rank armor or shield would be the dumbest decision possible.

The items had to land in the hands of someone who could use them more efficiently than the others so that we wouldn’t end up throwing pearls to swine.

Jung Ha-Yan and Kim Hyun-Sung were the only ones who could unleash Semi-Mythic level powers.

I also thought about giving Cha Hee-Ra a Mythic-rank item. An armor that could nullify her penalty and increase her stats at the same time would be the best item for her, and it wouldn't be a bad idea to secure that for her.

Ah, it wasn't a bad idea to give Elena an item as well because she was the most well-rounded individual here. Her skills also allowed her to exert influence over an entire army for an extended period of time.

'I wonder if a buff-type item is okay… '

I was a bit sad because there was a high chance that there wouldn't be any suitable items for me here. After all, the Dark Plaguelord or the Alchemist of Light didn't have many options when it came to items.

My role in battles had already been decided as well, so even if we managed to secure the Sage's Stone, I would still be hesitant about using it.

I looked around while having many happy thoughts and saw that they were ready to go fishing. Each and every member had their own fishing pole, which made me think that Park Deok-Gu had definitely prepared them before we went to Mirror Lake.

"I brought these fishing poles to go fishing for salmon. I know we're not about to fish for salmon, but at least we're going to fish for something! People once called me Gangwon Province's Fishing King, River Deok-Gu. I don't know what we'll get, but trust me. We'll get items that we have never seen before," Park Deok-Gu said.

'Does this pig even know how to feel bad?'

He actually looked proud.

"It's my first time, so I'm not sure if I'll do well. Wait, do items even bite the bait?"

'I'm sure they'll take care of that, Jo Hye-Jin. She sure is curious about the most random things.'

"S-Should I prepare some food? We haven't eaten anything since we ate Mirror Salmon…"

Elena and Han Sora decided to start cooking.

“I’ll go ahead and stand guard, Sub Guild Master.”

It seemed that Lee Chang-Ryeol was the only reliable person. The slightly depressing and quiet atmosphere instantly changed, and I thought that we could consider this dungeon conquest a part of our vacation.

Park Deok-Gu handed me a large fishing pole, and I handed that to Kim Hyun-Sung.

Kim Hyun-Sung awkwardly accepted the fishing pole.

He looked like he had never gone fishing before, so I had to confirm it.

“Have you done this before?” I asked.

“No, it’s my first time. I actually don’t know how to—I think it’s best if I stand guard as well,” Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

“No, you don’t have to. Mr. Chang-Ryeol is good enough. Well, you don’t need experience to start fishing. You just need to throw it in,” I told him.

“Is that so?” he asked.

“I think there’s a variety of items on the seafloor of the Sea of the Abandoned Dimension. We just have to pray that an item will get hooked. We don’t have to worry about changing the bait or moving the pole up and down to entice prey. You don’t need to be worried. Just have fun,” I explained.

“Then…”

With a *swish*, I heard a *ploop*.

Kim Hyun-Sung swung his fishing pole so seriously, but he ended up looking awkward.

His confidence as a swordsman couldn’t be seen at all.

He glanced at River Deok-Gu to copy the latter’s posture, but I didn’t think that it was that helpful.

Meanwhile, Ahn Ki-Mo was still vomiting out of motion sickness.

Jung Ha-Yan was happy because she was next to me.

The overall atmosphere was pretty fun, and I started smiling.

“I got one!” someone shouted behind me. “I got it! This one feels like a big one! It’s a big catch! A big one! I’m sure of it!”

I saw Park Deok-Gu trying to reel in an item while making a fool of himself. He was crying out so loudly that he seemed to be genuinely enjoying this situation and was relaxing amidst the tense atmosphere.

I couldn’t help but laugh because he was just reeling in an item, but he looked as if he was really having a power struggle with a fish, which was such an absurd sight.

“I’m not doing this on purpose. It really feels like it's fighting me! This one feels like a big one,” he said.

“M-Maybe the item doesn’t want to come up.”

I smiled at Jung Ha-Yan’s boring joke, but I suddenly leaned forward. I leaned forward to the extent that Kim Hyun-Sung had to catch me so that I wouldn’t fall into the water.

‘What’s going on? Damn it… ’

It seemed that Park Deok-Gu wasn’t overreacting. I leaned back as far as I could while holding the fishing pole, and my hands were trembling along with the fishing pole.

‘What the? What is this?’

“Looks like you got something as well, hyung-nim! *Kgh…*”

‘Don’t talk to me, man. I don’t have the luxury for that… ’

I mustered my mana to pull the item up, but it was resisting with all its might. It was ridiculous that an item was resisting, but I was definitely having fun. The strong vibration that was transmitted to me through the fishing pole was telling me that the item was at least Semi-Mythic.

'I understand why people go fishing.'

I kept on reeling it in, but the item just wouldn't come out.

Meanwhile, it seemed that Park Deok-Gu finally succeeded because he started screaming, "It's a Semi-Mythic item! Hyung-nim! It's a semi-mythic iteeeeeeeem!"

I wanted to turn and look at it, but I couldn't do that because I was currently fighting my own item.

Time passed, and I heard the others shouting that they had gotten something.

Unfortunately, I didn't have the luxury of looking at what the others managed to obtain. Elena and Sun Hee-Young took turns giving buffs, while Jung Ha-Yan also provided the others with light enhancement magic.

It had been around fifteen minutes since I started reeling in the item, so I decided to just give up. However, the vibration suddenly stopped, and the item stopped resisting for some reason.

I immediately took advantage of that opening and leaned backward as far as I could.

There was a *splash,* and a lance giving off an ominous crimson light emerged from the sea.

[Longinus' Lance - Mythic]

[A mythical weapon called 'The Lance That Pierced the Side of a God.' The item's origin is unknown, but the faint traces in the weapon is enough to extrapolate further information about the lance. It is impossible to block this lance. It has no other functions.]

'Shiiit… '

"Oppa! Oppa! Oppaaa! Mythic! Mythic!"

“Mr. Ki-Young! Mr. Ki-Young!”

Kim Hyun-Sung and Jung Ha-Yan were so thrilled at the sight that they started jumping around.

“What the?! What is that, hyung-nim? I can’t believe you got that!”

‘Yeah, I’m just that good.’

I felt proud, and I started feeling more arrogant. I really liked the fact that I ended up getting a Mythic-rank lance after fifteen minutes of hard work, but I also couldn’t quite believe that I actually obtained such a great weapon.

I wanted to take a picture of it as proof.

“Hey, let’s take a picture as proof. Man, all I got was a Semi-Mythic shield, but you actually managed to get a Mythic-rank item on your first try. Nice! I’d expected nothing less from you!” Park Deok-Gu complimented.

I was puzzled, but I started grinning after reading the item description.

‘This lance cannot be blocked.’

It was a simple yet domineering description. It was basically saying that it didn’t need any other functions because nothing could stop it.

Under the assumption that the outer gods’ defenses were powerful, we could use this lance to pierce through any of their defenses.

‘That’s right, damn it. That’s what I’m talking about!’

This weapon definitely wouldn’t need any other functions.

“*Wow…* This item… You can just take this with you, right? It says that it can’t be blocked. This is crazy. I think this is—”

“We’re just getting started, so I should try and fish more items,” I interrupted.

‘And I can’t take this with me… Jo Hye-Jin is the only one who can wield a lance here.’

Of course, it wouldn't be bad if Jo Hye-Jin used a Mythic-rank lance, but the stats were too great to make her the main wielder of this lance.

If I could take one more item with me, I would consider taking it with me, but we were only allowed to take one item with us.

'I'll take this if I don't get anything else… '

I got off to a good start, so I couldn't help but think that we would remain lucky until the end. Soon, I could hear the others cheering once more. We got another Mythic-rank item, but the others were getting Semi-Mythic and Legendary-rank items left and right.

I even saw them throwing the Legendary-rank items back into the sea, and I couldn't really get used to seeing them throwing away Legendary-rank items as if they were mere minnows.

"Another legendary. I. Want. A big one, too." Kim Ye-Ri casually threw the item that she had fished out back into the sea.

Overall, the atmosphere was intense.

"Man… this feels great! My pole is shaking!"

"I think it's fun. It's better than fishing for fish."

"I got one! I! I! Got one! Oppa!" shouted Kim Ye-Ri.

Everyone started screaming in joy, aside from the sad Kim Hyun-Sung, who still hadn't gotten even a single item. It had been about six hours since the quest started, but our lovely regressor's fishing pole was still quiet.

'Oh man… '

Kim Hyun-Sung's calm eyes started quivering ever so slightly.

'Hyun-Sung… '

CHAPTER 539
KIM HYUN-SUNG VS. PARK DEOK-GU (1)

Kim Hyun-Sung's face made him seem like he was asking—why can't I get one?

It was funny, but I could understand his feelings. After all, even Elena and Han Sora, who cooked for us and did most of the chores, had already gotten a few items. Lee Chang-Ryeol took a short break from standing guard to fish.

He got an item in less than ten minutes and went back to standing guard. I even heard him say that it was fun, and I saw Kim Hyun-Sung's eyes tremble ever so slightly when he heard Lee Chang-Ryeol's remark.

I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung was questioning why he wasn't getting any items. Park Deok-Gu and the others were contributing to his bitterness.

"*Wow*, this feels great! I've done this many times before, but this is the first time that fishing felt so good. We're not actually fishing for actual fish, but the feeling is still electrifying!"

Park Deok-Gu's excitement was really hurting Kim Hyun-Sung.

"I'm sure you know that feeling as well!" Park Deok-Gu continued.

Kim Hyun-Sung couldn't relate.

"Oh my! I think I got another one! I got one! I got it! I got it!"

Someone else fished out another item.

"Fishing is great!"

"Yeah, it's more enjoyable than I thought."

"I think Hee-Young noonim caught something as well! Reel it in!" Park Deok-Gu said.

"*Ah!*"

"I got one as well!"

"This is great. I think I got a big one as well!"

'Stop it, you pig… '

I understood that it was fun, but he couldn't read the air at all. Kim Hyun-Sung was the definition of composure, but I was bothered by the fact that he was the only one who remained quiet while everyone else was jumping around for joy.

There was at least one person who understood Kim Hyun-Sung's feelings—Jo Hye-Jin. Unfortunately, he still looked bitter and sad, despite Jo Hye-Jin taking care of him.

The hours of silence seemed like it was eating away at his mind.

In the end, he decided to move somewhere else. He definitely thought that the reason he wasn't getting any items was that he was fishing in a bad spot. He threw the fishing line with a grim look, but his situation remained unchanging.

"Looks like you're the only one who still hasn't caught anything," Park Deok-Gu commented.

"…"

"Hey, don't be in such a hurry. There are people without any luck in fishing. I think that's the reason why you haven't been able to catch anything," he said.

"I understand," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"You never know. You might catch something amazing… Anyway, I'm still going to be today's winner. The fishing king—River Deok-Gu! I think I can catch another Mythic-rank item today—Yes! I got another one!" he shouted.

"…"

Kim Hyun-Sung looked angry, and I was surprised that he had that kind of side as well.

I was even more surprised when he quietly followed tour guide Park Deok-Gu's instructions. He glanced at the others and was even trying to figure out what was wrong, but he didn't ask River Deok-Gu for tips.

It seemed that he was quite stubborn and proud.

'I still don't understand his personality.'

I didn't expect him to be competitive, but I was confused because he seemed competitive and not competitive at the same time. An hour later, Kim Hyun-Sung's eyes shone brilliantly, and he started looking around.

"Mr. Ki-Young!"

I wasn't sure why he was calling for me, but his voice sounded desperate.

"Pull it up!" I told him.

He looked really happy. The fishing pole bent, but he stood still and held on to it. He even started laughing, which made me think that he could finally relate to the feeling that Park Deok-Gu had mentioned earlier.

He pretended like he wasn't interested in other people's achievements, but it seemed that he learned from the others because his movements looked similar to them.

He was athletic, so he didn't seem like he was struggling.

He easily pulled out his item.

'Wait, that felt like it was too easy… '

I got worried that he fished a useless Legendary or Epic item. The guild members focused on him, so I prayed that he managed to fish something nice. However, Kim Hyun-Sung frowned upon seeing the item.

"Isn't it too small for the amount of effort he put in?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

Park Deok-Gu's remark was scathing, but Kim Hyun-Sung started smiling upon checking the item's stats. The item was a ring. I was worried because it didn't look as fancy as Longinus' Lance or the items that the others had fished out.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung looked like the happiest person in the world, so I presumed that the ring was a Mythic-rank item. He clenched his fists with a satisfied look, and I started getting happy for him as well.

'It must be a useful item.'

A useful item in the eyes of our lovely regressor had to be an item that would help us conquer this dungeon.

"The owner of this item has been decided, and this is good enough for me as well."

Kim Hyun-Sung sounded firm and determined. I was happy that he wasn't sad anymore and inspected the ring with Mind's Eye.

[Briche's Purification Ring.]

[This ring was created by the ancient goddess Briche for her lover by digging out her own heart. Mythic-rank debuff and curses will be immediately removed upon wearing the ring, and the wearer is immune to Mythic-rank debuff and curses while equipped. It will be soulbound to the first wearer.]

"*Ah…*"

'It's nice, but… '

I couldn't say for sure if people would want that item. After all, most people would want the beautiful and long Longinus' Lance, but I respected Kim Hyun-Sung's decision.

'Looks like that outer god or whatever uses curses or debuffs… '

In that case, Kim Hyun-Sung's decision to keep it was great.

His offense was already extreme, so it would be like adding a pair of wings to a tiger if he decided to wear that ring. However, my mind changed, and I instantly figured out what he was thinking when he started walking over toward me.

'Wow… this bastard… '

"I'm sure it'll immediately remove the curse that has been plaguing you, Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'He's insane… Seriously, man… he's insane.'

He had already had Durandal, a Mythic-rank sword, but it would be great if he had another Mythic-rank item to wear. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and he would be able to maximize it as well. I thought that perhaps the outer god that Sun Hee-Young had seen was a debuffer, but I was obviously mistaken.

A Mythic-rank item would be too much for a rearguard like me, but…

'Kim Hyun-Sung, you bastard… '

I was embarrassed and flustered about how I should react because it seemed that he was still obsessed with Belial's curse. Belial's curse was just a bait that I had employed to bait out Benigoa.

'Man, what should I say?'

I was happy that he was worried about me, but we had to prioritize dealing with the outer god. Unfortunately, Kim Hyun-Sung was the only one strong enough to face such an existence, and he needed excellent equipment to do that.

I wanted to ask him if he was confident without Mythic-rank items, but I couldn't do that.

Kim Hyun-Sung was strong, but I didn't think he was strong enough to deal with what I had been assuming was Belial's incarnation as the masked scum. Right now, he needed to pick an item that would empower him rather than give me a ring.

I wanted him to throw that ring away and start fishing once again.

However, his remark ignited everyone's hopes.

Sun Hee-Young and Elena were overjoyed, and even Jung Ha-Yan was jumping for joy.

I was sure they thought that the ring was great because it would remove Belial's

curse, but I really wanted to say…

'No, man. It's a shitty item. It'll be soulbound to the first wearer, and no one else can wear it afterward. I'm immune to debuffs and curses as the Dark Plaguelord, and there's also no reason for me to fight in the front lines.'

Or…

'Kim Hyun-Sung, you bastard! Are you confident? You're doing this because you're confident, right? Are you sure about this? You're confident about winning, and you have a plan, right? Man, please tell me you have a plan… '

"T-T-That's one less thing we need to worry about," Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

"Even though… it has calmed down for now, we don't know when it'll happen again, so I think it's best if we take care of it right away," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'Yeah, no thanks.'

Obviously, I had to say something.

"No, it's fine. We're only allowed to take one item with us, so I think you should take another item that will empower you. The curse has also weakened to the point that it's almost negligible," I said.

"But…"

"I have Goddess Benigoa, so I should be fine. As I said, I can control it—"

"No, you shouldn't try to control that power, Mr. Ki-Young. I'm not sure if it'll be helpful to you right now, but that power will consume you eventually. It's a dangerous power to wield, so please take it," Kim Hyun-Sung urged.

'Stop bullshitting, man… '

The difficulty of this dungeon depended on what item we decided to take out with us.

Unfortunately, I couldn't see a way to get out of this predicament. I looked around desperately, like a rat caught in a trap. However, everyone looked like they really

wanted me to accept the ring.

I accidentally met Park Deok-Gu's gaze, and I hurriedly looked away.

If the pig went crazy and started shouting that I should take it, there was a high chance that I would be forced to wear it. As expected, he started looking like he wanted to say something, which made me feel anxious.

However, I couldn't really stop him from talking.

"Hey, hyung-nim might be right."

'What?' His words took me aback.

"I know that everyone is worried about him, and I'm worried about him as well. I'd like him to accept the ring, but I think we should think about it properly. Hyung-nim is right, Goddess Benigoa is with him, so I think he will be fine for now. Hyung-nim also said that he's fine…" Park Deok-Gu explained.

'This pig… '

"If hyung-nim says that he can do it, then he can do it. If he says that he can endure it, then he can endure it. Hyung-nim knows better than anyone the danger of his transformation. If he really believes that he's in danger, I'm sure he would have already asked for the purification ring before you even offered it to him," he continued.

'Deok-Gu, shit… Deok-Guuu… '

There was an old saying about how the sparrow near a school would one day start singing the primer. I instantly saw through his thoughts when our eyes met once more.

'Yeeeeeeees!!! Deok-Gu…!'

I was starting to see him in a new light because I didn't expect him to be such a reliable person. He even winked at me discreetly, seemingly asking if his performance was good enough.

"Personally, I think that Doomginus or whatever Lance is better than that ring!" he

shouted.

‘No, damn it! That’s not true!’

“The lance! I pick the lance!” he shouted.

‘Please shut up, man… ’

CHAPTER 540
KIM HYUN-SUNG VS. PARK DEOK-GU (2)

The pig was getting started, and I couldn't help but laugh bitterly inside. There was no stopping the pig once he got started. It seemed that I had forgotten that bad habit of his, but it wasn't really strange because it had been a while since he had acted like that.

The way he discreetly influenced the conversation reminded me of an assassin.

'This pig… '

I obviously wouldn't accept his strange suggestion and pick the lance. We had enough firepower. Kim Hyun-Sung's Durandal was stronger than Longinus, which meant that it was the cream of the crop among Mythic-rank items when it came to power efficiency.

Kim Hyun-Sung even said that he still couldn't unleash the full power of his sword, which meant that Kim Hyun-Sung still had room to grow. In other words, there was no need to take that lance since no one would use it.

'Who's going to use it?'

I was sure we would eventually find its rightful owner, but they wouldn't be someone close enough to me. Unfortunately, Jo Hye-Jin's stats were too low. I wasn't looking down on her, but she wouldn't be able to use a Mythic-rank item effectively.

Kim Hyun-Sung could wield a lance, but he already had Durandal.

"No, the purification ring is more—" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"No! It has to be the lance! For some reason, my intuition is telling me that," Park Deok-Gu said.

"I understand, but our priority is to remove the curse on Mr. Ki-Young, so this ring is the better choice," Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

“Do you not have any faith in hyung-nim? It has to be the lance! A lance that cannot be blocked is too powerful to be skipped!” exclaimed Park Deok-Gu.

“The lance’s effect isn’t that rare. It’s not bad, but the purification ring is better,” Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

“I believe in hyung-nim, and I’m sure he won’t repeat his mistakes. I choose the lance!” Park Deok-Gu shouted.

“I trust Mr. Ki-Young as well, but Mr. Ki-Young’s issue has to be addressed as soon as possible, so I choose the ring,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“The lance!”

“The ring!”

“Ring!”

“Laaaaaaance!!”

“Ring!!”

“Laaaaaaaaaaance!!!”

“Ri!”

“Laaaaaaaaaaaaaaance!!!”

‘Park Deok-Gu, this pig.’

I had seen this before in the tutorial dungeon, and it was when I was given the choice to choose black mage or alchemist. I could still remember that Park Deok-Gu had told me to choose black mage back then, so my desire for the lance decreased. There had to be something wrong with it, or there would definitely be something better than it.

I followed Kim Hyun-Sung’s suggestion back then, and it ended up being one of the best decisions I had ever made.

‘I did have a hard time in the beginning, though… ’

However, I managed to succeed in increasing the quality of the continent's adventurers and soldiers. I also had my personal success as Light Ki-Young.

'Wait, Kim Hyun-Sung told me to be an archer… '

I got confused. I had no idea whether Kim Hyun-Sung's intuition was good or bad.

Anyway, at this point, the best choice was to ignore their argument and focus more on the event. I wasn't sure how much time we had left, but I expected that we still had a good amount of time left, so I decided to think about it carefully.

[The dungeon quest will end in one hour. Please select your desired item.]

'Shit.'

I had to take back what I said and decide what I was going to take as soon as possible.

It seemed that I wasn't the only one who had seen that message because the guild members were suddenly in a debate scrum. It wasn't a bad idea to choose the lance, but I would only choose that if there were no other choices.

I examined the items that the guild members had fished out, but I didn't like any of them.

There were Mythic-rank items, but they seemed difficult to use. They weren't really offense-type items as well.

At this point, it would be nice if there was a staff for Jung Ha-Yan or an item that could protect Kim Hyun-Sung. Perhaps armor, an item with a dodge function, a pair of boots that would make him even faster, or a cape that could nullify magic…

I started thinking that perhaps it would be better if I took a Semi-Mythic item. They were lacking compared to Mythic-rank items, but they were useful as well.

'Shit.'

It was unfortunate that we no longer had much time. I had to be assertive. I felt bad because I would definitely hurt our Hyun-Sung, but the current Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't the usual Kim Hyun-Sung.

Therefore, I had to be stern and assertive.

"I won't accept Briche's Ring."

Kim Hyun-Sung was startled, and he urged. "No, you have to accept it."

'Kim Hyun-Sung, shit.'

"I don't need it right now. It's also an item that won't be too helpful to the guild or to the continent," I told him.

"But…!"

We didn't have enough time to quarrel, so I had no choice but to use my trump card. I stared at Kim Hyun-Sung with a scornful look. He had to have noticed that I was being serious because his expression started to change.

It seemed that my gamble was effective, so I said, "I'm disappointed."

"What?"

"I didn't expect that you would have such little trust in me. *Ha…"* I replied.

I directed a sorrowful and disappointed look at him, and I made sure to look like I was extremely disappointed in him.

"Didn't I tell you that I'm okay without that item? Deok-Gu was right. If I really were in danger, I would've asked for the ring myself. Didn't I tell you several times that I'm not in danger, Mr. Hyun-Sung?" I pointed out.

"*Uh…"*

"I understand what you're thinking, but I will never accept the ring, Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung," I said.

"*Uhh…"*

“I understand why you locked me up…” I muttered.

‘Wow, it worked. It definitely worked.’

I felt bad about calling him out using his full name in a cold voice, but it was necessary to end this argument. I thought Kim Hyun-Sung had overreacted by staggering, but I didn’t have the luxury of comforting him.

“I knew hyung-nim would agree with me. Then, this lance—” Park Deok-Gu started.

However, I interrupted him. “No, I won’t be taking that either. Right now, I think it’s best to try and fish out as many items as we can as soon as possible. Honestly, I don’t see any decent items aside from the Longinus’ Lance. I’m sure you’ve seen the message, but we only have an hour left, so let’s return to fishing. I think we should at least fish out three more Mythic-rank items.”

“Understood, Sub Guild Master.”

“B-But…! Hyung-nim! If you think about it—”

“Deok-Gu, listen to me,” I said.

‘I was fuckin charismatic, man.’

My cold voice discouraged Park Deok-Gu, and the quick-witted guild members quickly returned to their fishing pots. However, it seemed that Sun Hee-Young and Elena had gotten attached to the ring because they were still looking at it, but they dispersed after seeing the discouraged Kim Hyun-Sung walking away.

Jung Ha-Yan approached me quietly and said, “I-I-I believe in you, oppa. Yeah…”

‘Don’t lie. You told me to accept the ring, too.’

She definitely had a clever side. It was a bit cute to see her acting like a fox, but I really couldn’t enjoy her cuteness at the moment.

We had to get at least three more mythic-rank items, and I didn’t want to pick the lance.

I got more and more desperate as time passed, and I couldn’t understand why we

weren't fishing out any items anymore. I wanted to take it easy during the final five minutes of the quest, but it seemed that I wouldn't be able to do that.

This was the first time I felt bitter about an unmoving fishing pole.

The other guild members were fishing out items from time to time, but the majority of them were Legendary-rank items. None of us got any more Mythic-rank items, but the problem was that each and every item was useless.

O-Oppa, look at this one. I think it's a useful item. It's a pair of earrings, and if two people wear a piece each, they can f-fuse with each other. It gives a huge stat increase as well. I-I think it's an amazing item. It's also a Mythic-rank item, but once they fuse, they won't be able to return to their original bodies…" Jung Ha-Yan explained.

'Is there really a need to fuse… Are you trying to become one with me? Stop those strange thoughts, Ha-Yan. I have no plans of becoming a twin-headed Ha-Yan Ki-Young.'

"Sub Guild Master, this is a Mythic-rank love potion. It's a consumable item, but its effect is absolute. It doesn't last forever, though."

We were getting nothing but useless items.

[The dungeon quest will end in 30 minutes. Please select your desired item.]

'No… '

Damn it, I couldn't let it end like this.

'Shit… '

Park Deok-Gu wasn't anxious because he was certain that I would choose Longinus' Lance if another item didn't appear. He actually looked relieved whenever weird items were fished out.

Those items were less valuable than the lance, so he was confident that I wouldn't

choose any of them.

“Time is ticking… I think it’s to make a decision,” Park Deok-Gu suggested.

‘Not yet, you pig.’

[The dungeon quest will end in 15 minutes. Please select your desired item.]

“Hyung-nim,” he called out.

“Wait until the last five minutes, Deok-Gu. Let’s think about it at the final bite,” I told him.

“Okay.”

“Okay, Sub Guild Master.”

‘Kim Hyun-Sung, you should be fishing as well. Why are you spacing out, man?’

He didn’t even notice that he got a bite.

[The dungeon quest will end in 10 minutes. Please select your desired item.]

We really didn’t have any time left. I looked around anxiously and saw some guild members fighting with the items that bit their lines.

However, nothing useful had come up so far, so there was a really high chance that I would end up choosing Longinus’ Lance.

I tried biting my lips, but nothing changed.

However, I was suddenly pulled forward by my fishing line.

‘This is the last. Damn it, this is it… ’

This was the final item. I grabbed the pole tightly and pulled it out with all my might.

The item slowly emerged from the sea.

[The dungeon quest will end in 5 minutes. Please select your desired item.]

I checked the details of the item and immediately compared it to Longinus' Lance.

Fortunately, the effects of the two items were clear, so it didn’t take me that long to compare them.

[The dungeon quest will end in 1 minute. Please select your desired item.]

I grabbed one of the items on the floor, and our ship was starting to get swept away.

“Spread the sail! The sail! Sail…!”

It didn’t take us long to return to Mirror Lake.

I smiled faintly and shouted, “I got it!”

CHAPTER 541
A SINCERE APOLOGY (1)

Boom!

There was a loud noise as the ship rose to the surface. It sounded like there was an explosion, but I didn't really feel that uncomfortable. I felt relieved as the ship flew out of the waters and landed.

The guild members sighed in relief as well. I could relate to their feelings because we had spent quite some time in a place that we couldn't quite describe. I turned to look at the others, but before I could even say anything, the Blue Guild's one and only pirate wannabe—Ahn Ki-Mo—started vomiting.

"*Bleeeeeeeeck!*"

'This guy's useless… '

"*Bleeeeeeeeeeeck!*"

I knew he was going to cause trouble, but I didn't expect him to vomit into a clean lake. He looked like he was in a lot of pain, but I could see that he was extremely happy that we managed to return safely.

'It was totally unexpected.'

I didn't expect that nothing dangerous would happen aside from when Sun Hee-Young was swept by the waves. I wanted to celebrate because we technically conquered a Mythic-rank dungeon.

'Now that I think about it, reaching that place itself was a Mythic-rank quest.'

If it hadn't been for the Nice Boat, we would have died the moment we got sucked into that wormhole.

Our corpses would be floating around the dimensional sea forever.

We could say that we had achieved something mythical by getting into that space and exiting it safely.

I looked around just in case and saw the beautiful scenery I had seen just a few hours ago.

“Looks like we returned safely.”

The person that spoke was unicorn Jo Hye-Jin. She looked at me worriedly.

“Do you feel anything strange, Sub Guild Master?” she asked.

“No, I’m fine. Please check how the other guild members are doing. If someone isn’t feeling well, please let me know privately. And please tell Miss Hee-Young to rest and have someone escort her back… I’d appreciate it if you could check if she has any other symptoms,” I answered.

“Sure. She probably…”

“It’s possible that she’s experiencing some kind of side effect. She has been spacing out since that incident…” I told her.

“I’ll make sure that it gets done, Sub Guild Master,” she said.

“…”

‘She looks like she wants to tell me something.’

She obviously wanted to say something to me because she wasn’t walking away. Now that I thought about it, it had been quite a while since we spent time by ourselves. We were friends, so I easily deduced what she wanted to say.

“What? Do you want to buy me a drink or something?” I asked.

“No, it’s nothing like that…”

“So what is it?” I asked.

“I’d appreciate it if you could talk to the guild master… He looks more shocked than I thought,” Jo Hye-Jin replied.

'Uh, no thanks. He needs to be a bit more shocked.'

I glanced at Kim Hyun-Sung and saw that Jo Hye-Jin was right. His shoulders were drooping, and he couldn't even look at me properly. He was ordering the guild members to appear like he was fine, but he still seemed like an abandoned puppy.

However, what could I do? He simply reaped what he had sowed.

He had to make up for his mistake.

'He's probably thinking that I no longer trust him.'

I honestly didn't put much thought into my words earlier, but those words were probably like daggers that pierced his heart. My relationship with the lovely regressor was built with inexplicable trust as the foundation.

Of course, it wasn't like we had received a certificate as proof of our trust in each other, but we could feel each other's trust without saying anything.

Kim Hyun-Sung hadn't said anything about my strange behaviors, and it was all because he trusted me. Of course, I also showed him that I trusted him by not making any comments about his behavior.

The dream incident during the Doom Ki-Young arc also intensified our trust in each other.

I wondered why I didn't use that card earlier.

'Why can't you trust me?'

It was such a perfect card that it could be considered an ultimate spell. It was different from asking him why he didn't know why I was mad, but it was basically the same thing.

I was sure that he was internally shaken up.

'Could it really be because I don't trust Lee Ki-Young?'

Or…

'I need to fix it somehow and apologize.'

He was probably having either of those thoughts.

To make things worse, my words—I understand why you locked me up—earlier definitely inflicted critical damage on him. He was probably thinking about resolving any misunderstandings. I was sure that he would talk to me either today or tomorrow.

One thing was for sure—he would ask me out by himself, so I didn't have to approach Kim Hyun-Sung and make him feel better like Jo Hye-Jin's request.

Our quarrel was unique because the loser would be the one who decided to approach the other party first. Kim Hyun-sung was already giving off the air of a loser, but I wanted to ensure my victory, so I continued to act like I was angry.

'I think I'm getting another bag.'

Kim Hyun-Sung had mentioned the empty spot on my cabinet, and he was right. It had been bothering me for quite a while now, and it was about time I filled that empty spot.

"What are you thinking about? I've been talking to you," Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"I've been thinking about many things… I'll take care of the issue with Mr. Hyun-Sung, so please don't worry," I replied.

"Well, I have nothing more to say since you said so… *Ahem*, anyway, are you satisfied with the item that you got?" she asked.

"Yes, it's not bad. Honestly, I'm not *that* satisfied, but it's not the worst or the best… Now that I think about it, I do feel kind of bad for you," I said.

"What's with the casual speech? Well, you don't have to worry about me. Even if you brought Longinus' Lance, I wouldn't have been able to use it properly. To be honest, I was kind of disappointed. The fact that you didn't choose Longinus' Lance means that I'm not good enough to wield it. I thought I'd improved quite a bit, but… I guess you're still unsatisfied," she explained.

"No, you're good enough," I commented.

“Yeah, right… You were obviously thinking that handing over that lance to me was like throwing pearls to swine. I won’t hold a grudge, so you don’t have to worry. I’m not good enough to wield it anyway,” she said.

“Are you mad?” I asked.

“No, I’m not mad…” she replied.

“You’re mad,” I said.

“I’m not. I’m not the type to get mad over things like that… The Blue Guild’s benefits have to be prioritized. I understand that, and it is what every guild member should do,” she said.

“No, you’re mad,” I commented.

“I said I’m not mad,” she repeated.

“You are. You’re angry,” I teased.

“No! I’m not angry! You…!” she shouted.

“You’re angry…”

“No, I’m not!” she yelled.

Jo Hye-Jin shouted, causing everyone to look at her. The guild members seemed surprised to see me teasing Jo Hye-Jin and talking to her casually. Now that I thought about it…

‘Are others unaware of the fact that we’re close?’

I was convinced that only Jung Ha-Yan knew about the fact that Jo Hye-Jin and I were pretty close because Jung Ha-Yan had always been wary of Jo Hye-Jin. Still, we had been spending time with each other, and Jung Ha-Yan probably judged that we were simply meeting up for business. We ate! Drank together! Played games together! Went to the sauna together! We sometimes went out together as well, but…

‘We definitely don’t look good together.’

I could totally understand why the others hadn't caught on to our relationship just yet, and it was all because I had always been pretty formal whenever I was interacting with Jo Hye-Jin.

Jo Hye-Jin realized her mistake, and she turned to look at the others who were a bit distant from us. Ahn Ki-Mo and Yoo Ah-Young's eyes widened, and their jaws dropped to the floor.

The others had a similar reaction.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked half surprised and half uncomfortable.

'Damn it, Hyun-Sung… You're jealous of us! Hye-Jin, I think you have a chance.'

I wasn't sure if he was even aware of his jealousy, but I could see that he was uncomfortable seeing Jo Hye-Jin and me being close to each other.

The slow-witted Jo Hye-Jin looked away and stared at me.

I unknowingly whispered to her, "Hye-Jin, I usually don't say something like this, but I think that you really have a chance."

"What are you talking about?" she asked.

"I really thought that you have no chance, but I guess even the strongest walls will collapse if you attack it long enough. I think it's finally working… Did you do anything that made him have a change of heart?" I asked.

"No, I didn't do anything. I've already given up somewhat, and I haven't really talked to him privately since that incident," she answered.

"You never know… Anyway, that dream you've thrown away, let's think about it again," I told her.

"Forget it," she said.

"For some reason, I feel like he's being jealous…" I said.

"Who…"

“Mr. Hyun-Sung.”

“Really?” she asked.

“I’m sure of it,” I replied.

“Well… it doesn’t matter to me anymore,” she said.

“You say that, but you look kind of happy,” I pointed out.

“That’s not true,” she denied.

“Hey, let’s be honest here. You’re happy that he’s jealous,” I repeated.

“I’m not,” she said.

“You are,” I teased.

“I’m not! Seriously!” she shouted.

I tapped her shoulder jokingly, and Jo Hye-Jin started trembling.

It was funny seeing her trying her best to suppress her anger.

“Well, it’s undeniable that we’ve taken a step forward. I’m pretty good at reading people. *Ah*, we should have made him jealous back then,” I commented.

“Please don’t say…”

“Well, it sounds like you haven't completely given up. Anyway, we’re quite busy right now, but don’t let go of that sliver of hope,” I advised.

“…” Jo Hye-Jin didn’t say anything, but she started looking hopeful.

Her hopes intensified, and she was overjoyed when Kim Ye-Ri approached us.

“Hye-Jin unni,” Kim Ye-Ri called out.

“Yeah?”

“Hyun-Sung oppa. Said he had something to talk about. He wants you to go to him,” she said.

“*Oh*, really?” Jo Hye-Jin asked. She didn’t even wait for Kim Ye-Ri’s reply as she immediately left and headed over to Kim Hyun-Sung.

‘What did I say, Hye-Jin? I can see your desperation from here, Hye-Jin… I knew you were lying when you said you’ve given up.’

“And mister,” said Kim Ye-Ri.

“What?”

“Oppa wanted me to ask you if you’re available tomorrow. He said he has lots to talk about you,” she replied.

“Talk about what?” I asked.

“Important things,” she answered.

“What kind of important things?” I questioned.

“I don’t know. He seemed like he had some business to take care of… Yeah, I think that’s why,” she answered.

“*Hm…*”

“I have delivered the message, so I’m going to help the others clean,” she said.

“Okay, keep up the good work,” I complimented.

“You, too.”

I looked in front of me with an indifferent look, and I saw Jo Hye-Jin talking with Kim Hyun-Sung.

I wasn’t sure why Kim Hyun-Sung wanted to talk to me, but it wasn’t that difficult to deduce why. He definitely wanted to apologize. I was also convinced that he was about to reveal a few things and snowball from there until revealing his status as a regressor.

To be honest, it felt like he had been planning on doing something like that for quite a while now, but I figured that he thought that it would be easier to talk about it if I had already recovered somewhat.

There was also a chance that he thought that he couldn't drag it out anymore after Sun Hee-Young saw an outer god.

I couldn't help but smile like Jo Hye-Jin.

'Damn, Hye-Jin. Looks like the two of us will finally be happy… '

CHAPTER 542
A SINCERE APOLOGY (2)

“O-O-Oppa, are you going somewhere?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“There are some tasks I need to take care of with Mr. Hyun-Sung… Why?” I asked.

“Nothing, it’s just…” she paused.

“It seemed kind of urgent… I’d like to spend time with you if possible, but the timing is bad,” I told her.

“R-Really?” she asked.

“Of course. We’re at Mirror Lake, and it’s been a while since we’ve gone on a date. I was going to take Deok-Gu’s suggestion, and I have lots to tell you as well. It’s been a while since we spent some time alone. It’s unfortunate, but I’m sorry. Let’s take a walk when I return,” I said.

“I-It’s fine. I don’t… have time today either… Hyun-Sung oppa gave me lots of tasks. I need to write a report about Mirror Lake with the other guild members, and I need to search the area to see if there are more dungeons. Y-your name wasn’t on the list, so… I asked out of curiosity,” she explained.

“More dungeons?” I asked.

“Yes, he said that there might be more dungeons… We also need to see if any monsters managed to come out of the dungeon to Mirror Lake. I don’t know the details either, but it seems like we have to take care of many things…” she replied.

‘Kim Hyun-Sung, this bastard. He really made up his mind… ’

The tasks that Kim Hyun-Sung had handed over to the other members were useless, so it was clear that he didn’t want to be disturbed today. I could see why he assigned those tasks to the guild members, even though the scout team could do it.

He probably thought that the scout team wasn't strong enough to handle the difficulty.

However, we were currently on vacation, so he could have postponed it until we were done having fun.

He interrupted my *date*, which Jung Ha-Yan firmly believed I had planned for us. It wasn't something to be *really* angry about, but it was worth being angry over.

Jung Ha-Yan had decided to let it slide, which made me realize that the kidnapping case had truly disturbed her.

'She's discouraged.'

Jung Ha-Yan had always been timid, but she had become even more timid than before. I could see that she still wanted to become stronger because she was really focused on her magic research.

She was still guilty about the incident, and that was why she had gotten more timid. I could still remember how she came to my room last night while crying and saying that she had a nightmare.

Jung Ha-Yan was struggling as well.

'I couldn't even sleep thanks to her. Damn it.'

She slept well, but I couldn't sleep. I looked so haggard today because of it. I wasn't exactly satisfied with my haggard look, but…

'It doesn't look bad.'

My haggard look made me look like I was struggling a lot.

'Let's not overdo it.'

I washed up and got dressed while ignoring Jung Ha-Yan, who kept on staring at me.

I was sure that the guild members would leave once I departed with Kim Hyun-Sung.

I checked myself in the mirror and glanced at the Infinity Bag. I had always been

carrying the Infinity Bag with me, but I didn't think that it was necessary for me to carry it today. I would be with Kim Hyun-Sung, so I wouldn't need any potions.

I also wanted to show him that I wouldn't carry around items that he had gifted to me.

"You're not going to take your bag with you?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"Yeah, I don't think we'll be going into battle… The bag contains nothing but alchemy-related items, anyway," I replied.

"W-When will you come back?" she asked.

"I'll probably be back within today… I'm not sure either. We can go on our date as soon as I come back, so wait for me. I know it's hard, but wait for me," I answered.

"I-I want to go, too…" she mumbled.

'No, Ha-Yan. Today is an important day.'

Mankind's next step would be decided today—would mankind take a step back or take a step forward? It would be decided today.

"You can come with me next time. When are you leaving?" I asked.

"I-I'm going to stay in bed a bit longer," she answered.

"All right then."

I gave her a tight hug. I pushed her back slightly to signal that the hug was over, but she continued to hug me tightly. She actually stuck to me like a leech, and the way she was sniffling confused me. I was finally free a few minutes later, and I quickly left for the lobby in case she asked me to stay a bit longer.

I saw Kim Hyun-Sung upon arriving at the lobby, and he was looking at me with a strange expression.

He was unarmed, which was different from his usual self. He did have his sword at his waist, but he was in a comfortable outfit. Of course, he wasn't wearing tattered clothes.

For some reason, it looked like he had worked on his outfit a bit.

Overall, he gave off a serious atmosphere.

'There's seriously something wrong with him… '

I didn't expect that he would look so stiff as if he were a stone. The way he stood upright made me feel kind of bad for him. I was thinking about making him feel better, but I decided against doing something like that. It was important to make him spill the beans voluntarily, and a tense air between us was important in achieving that.

I had to avoid greeting him. Kim Hyun-Sung raised his hand awkwardly, but all I did was bow slightly.

"Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung greeted.

"Looks like I'm late," I commented.

"No, you're actually right on time," he said.

"I heard we have some work that needs to be taken care of today…" I said.

"It's honestly not an important task, but I wanted to talk to you about many things and… there are things I'd like to apologize for…" he explained.

"*Ah…*"

"Are you busy?" he asked.

"No, I'm not, but…" I answered.

"…"

'Man, he's so frustrating to deal with. However, I actually find him pitiful as well.'

I didn't want to describe him that way, but the way he was hesitating made him look like someone with communication issues. The way his eyes were trembling made it clear that he was anxious about all this.

I wanted to maintain my cold look, but I had no other choice but to do something else.

“Then, let’s head out for now,” I suggested.

“Sure. Let’s do that. I brought my griffon…” he said.

“Where are we going that you even brought your griffon?” I asked.

“It’s not that far, and we’ll get there faster with a griffon than by carriage,” he replied.

“That’s good.”

‘All right, let me see where you’re going to take me.’

It seemed that he had brought over the black griffon—the one I gifted to him—rather than Whitefall. Of course, I knew why he didn’t bring Whitefall here. It was all because Whitefall was currently taking care of her baby. The saddle on the griffon allowed the riders to ride side to side, so it felt like I was going on a drive with him in the driver’s seat and me in the passenger seat.

The griffon saw Kim Hyun-Sung and started walking over to him. Kim Hyun-Sung petted the griffon for a while before we took a seat. I could tell that he really liked his griffon.

Raising griffons was his one and only hobby. The saddle was so comfortable that it felt like I was sitting on a high-quality sofa, and there was even a seatbelt. He was also skilled at driving the griffon.

Kim Hyun-Sung struck the griffon as a signal, and the latter took to the skies.

The large trees, buildings, and lake started to get smaller.

We soon arrived at our destination. I thought we were going to either Lindel or the Sacred Democratic Country, but we arrived at a small city between Lindel and Sacred the Democratic Country.

‘The small city of Heren?’

The small city of Heren was located right between Lindel and the Sacred Democratic

Country. I wasn't sure about Kim Hyun-Sung, but I hadn't really visited this city that much. It was in a good location, so it was like the border between Lindel and the Sacred Democratic Country, no…

'It's not exactly like that.'

A detour to Heren was a bit tiring by carriage, and I had no reason to stop by Heren as well using a griffon. However, the City of Heren was frequented by small to mid-sized parties that needed to take a break on their journey to Lindel or to the Sacred Democratic Country. It was also frequented by large guilds.

In other words, Heren was like a melting pot. Between the three strongest guilds of Lindel, the Black Swan Guild had the most influence over Heren.

'He must've contacted Park Yeon-Joo.'

It would be too burdensome to spend time in the capital since there were a ton of people there, so he decided to spend time with me in a small city.

'Yeah, I don't really like the capital either.'

"It's Heren." I pointed out.

"Yes."

"…"

"We… decided to expand Heren a bit along with the Lindel restoration project. It was a project I recommended while you were resting… in that room. The guild members were busy… so I started working on it myself, but there were things I was worried about when it came to doing business in the city, so I wanted to get some advice, so…" Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

"*Ah*, you can just leave that up to me. Did Miss Kim Mi-Young help you?" I asked.

"No, she didn't. She was working on something else, so…" he answered.

"I understand very well what you're trying to say. It sounds like a good plan. I'd like to see it as soon as possible," I told him.

'It was a nice excuse.'

Kim Hyun-Sung nodded with satisfaction as well. Anyway, this was basically a build-up to the main point. There was no way he would abandon our businesses rather than expand them, so I could see that he had truly worked on it.

I could deduce that his changes were already on the verge of being implemented.

The city still looked like a mess, so he was probably trying to walk around it by using the business in the city as an excuse to ask for help.

He handed me the documents that he had brought with him. I read the documents one by one while walking down the streets of Heren, but there wasn't a single thing that bothered me.

"So you're saying that the residential area is the problem," I said.

"Yes. There are too many people in the capital to the extent that things are starting to get extremely complicated. No one is really complaining, but there are people expressing their discomfort," Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

"I think it'll be fine to build a residential area in the area you have selected, and I like your idea of expanding the square a bit. However…" I trailed off.

"Yes, we received opinions from people saying that the hunting grounds are pretty far, so the guild decided to operate carriages here. Carriages visit the place often to rest anyway, so I don't think we need to build a new facility. We can also build transient houses in the area, and I think the Blue Guild will build a separate supply store here."

'You know very well that your hyung likes money. Sorry, I'm materialistic. Still, I'm proud of you, man.'

"I believe the potions store here will be the biggest one second only to Rift Land. Given the right conditions, I believe that the supply chain can even be connected to Celia. I've already spoken to the other guilds and a few investors," he informed.

"That's good," I commented.

Kim Hyun-Sung's words carried weight, and I couldn't stop myself from smiling. The

idea of turning a small city into a massive rest area was good, and Heren would benefit from it as well.

It was a hassle to visit Heren aside from if one was going to Lindel or to the capital, so why not turn Heren into a place where people would want to stay and do business?

Kim Hyun-Sung sighed in relief after seeing my positive reaction. He seemed aware of the fact that he had earned some brownie points, and he continued talking after gaining some confidence.

“What do you think? How about we get something to eat…” Kim Hyun-Sung suggested.

“Sure, that sounds like a good idea,” I answered.

“I reserved a place for us to eat. Let’s go there,” he said.

“Sure.”

I looked up and started looking around to get a feel of the city…

‘What the… What’s going on?’

People were staring at us from every direction for some reason.

CHAPTER 543
A SINCERE APOLOGY (3)

It wasn't strange that we were attracting so much attention. After all, this was the Guild Master and the Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild's first visit to Heren. We were popular figures, so it made even more sense that they could recognize us both.

I felt like a monkey in a zoo, but I understood that they simply couldn't pry their eyes away from us.

'I've already gotten used to it by now… '

It seemed that the people in Heren were being considerate. They probably heard through the media that the Blue Guild was currently on vacation, so they probably thought this was part of our vacation. Normally, people would come up and ask to shake our hands, but today, they didn't do anything other than just observe us from afar.

'This is pretty nice, and I like the denizens of this place as well… '

"Aren't they on vacation? I wonder why they're in Heren all of a sudden."

"Where are the other guild members? I think it's just the two of them. This is the first time, right?"

"*Shh.*"

The comments I heard from them bothered me, but they remained quiet not long after. I wasn't sure if Kim Hyun-Sung was aware of this, but he started walking with confidence, and it didn't take long for us to arrive at a restaurant.

"*Huh? Oh!* Yes, please come in. I-It's for two people, right?" asked the staffer.

"Yes," Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

"What would you like to order?" asked the staffer.

“What’s the most popular dish?” he asked.

“The dishes I would recommend are…”

‘Wow, this guy reserved the terrace seat.’

The staffer definitely didn’t expect Kim Hyun-Sung to be *that* Kim Hyun-Sung because they looked really flustered and overwhelmed. I told him to order anything on the menu, and he started talking to the staff about his order.

It looked like the two were having a debate because he asked things like which dish was popular or which dish was the most delicious, and their conversation made me think that they were entrepreneurs who were about to sign an important contract.

I got busy looking outside.

“Are they fighting?”

“The mood between them feels awkward as well. I’m sure something happened.”

‘Nothing happened, ladies. I can’t even keep acting because of where we’re sitting.’

I didn’t want to see headlines about how the Guild Master and Father Lee Ki-Young were fighting on the front pages of tomorrow’s newspapers. I didn’t think that this was what Kim Hyun-Sung was aiming for, but I had no choice but to loosen up a little.

I could stop the media, but rumors were difficult to handle.

“I’ll have this one… What about you, Mr. Ki-Young…” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“I’ll have the same thing,” I replied.

“Okay, I’ll make sure to bring those out for you. Would you like some wine?” asked the staffer.

“I think I made a request to prepare something in advance. Did the restaurant not receive it?” asked Kim Hyung-Sung.

“*Ah!* No, I’ll check—*Oh,* yes. I think it’s ready right now. I-I’m sorry. I’ll bring it out after I check. I-I hope you two enjoy your time,” the staffer stuttered.

“Thank you.”

“Did you prepare the wine in advance?” I asked.

“Yes. Have you heard of Grave Grape?” he asked.

“It’s my first time hearing that…” I replied.

“There’s a small cave located not too far from Heren, and interestingly, I heard there are grapes that can only be harvested there. This restaurant happens to serve them. That cave was discovered a hundred and fifty years ago. I was told that I could purchase such an old wine here, so I asked them to prepare it in advance,” he explained.

“That’s interesting. I wonder if there’s a dungeon in that cave,” I said.

“I sent the scout team a few times, but I heard that they didn’t find anything. I'm sure it’s a different case from Mirror Lake,” he replied.

“*Hm…*”

“More importantly, Mr. Ki-Young,” he said.

“Yes?”

“First of all, I’d like to thank you,” he answered.

“About what?” I asked.

“Regarding the item at the Sea of Dimension…” he replied.

“*Ah*, don’t worry about it. No one else would be able to use it other than you, and it’s not like I’m the one who got it…” I told him.

“Still, I’ll make sure to take good care of the pendant you gave me,” he said.

“There’s really no need for you to thank me,” I repeated.

“And… about what happened at the Sea of Dimension… I’d like to officially apologize… I’m sure you’ll feel uncomfortable and strange about this, but I wanted to

give that ring to you because…"

'Man, why is he being serious at a place like this?'

People were watching us from all directions, and I was sure that he was extremely nervous because he forgot to cast soundproofing magic. He filtered the background noises and the voices of other people with his mana to focus on our conversation, but I was sure that he heard what people were saying earlier about us.

As expected, I started seeing people whispering to each other.

'Wow, I felt it when I was pretending to be Lee Ki-Yeon, but he's really… '

Kim Hyun-Sung was bad with timing, and he wasn't that great at reading the room.

I couldn't help but be suspicious of the relationships he had in his past life.

Rumors about a conflict between the guild members over the distribution of items that we had coincidentally found in a dungeon were on the verge of spreading—no, perhaps a rumor like that was already spreading.

The people outside couldn't hear our voices, but I was sure they were drawing conclusions by themselves.

'This atmosphere doesn't help either.'

We could cast soundproofing magic, but we couldn't use magic to change the atmosphere between us. The other people in the restaurant definitely noticed the tense air between us because they were whispering to each other.

I wanted to accept his apology and change the atmosphere, but I had no choice but to do something else.

"I don't want to talk about that here."

"*Ah*, okay," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

I rejected his first move, but I had to fix his mood immediately.

"You don't have to worry too much about it. I think I was a bit too harsh at the time.

You don't need to mention it here. The food is coming as well." I pointed out.

"But—you're right. I think I was being a bit hasty. I'm sorry," he apologized.

'Don't look sad, man. They're whispering while looking at us.'

"Let's eat first. I'm really excited because the wine looks delicious. It's nice," I suggested.

"You think so?" he asked.

'Yeah, look happy!'

"I think out of all the drinks I drank recently, this one is the best one. I can't really drink a lot because I don't really feel well these days, but this tastes amazing on my tastebuds. It's really delicious," I replied.

"I'm glad," he said.

"By the way, are we going to look around more after we eat?" I asked.

"No, we still have places we need to visit… We also need to visit the auction house…" he answered.

"Is there something good there? Isn't the auction house--*Ah!*" I exclaimed.

"That's right. The auction house here is currently the biggest nearby auction house because of the ongoing restoration works. I would like to tell you what I'm aiming for, but it won't be a surprise anymore. Anyway, it's my repayment for the item you gave me… You can look forward to it," he explained.

'He must've discovered another piece in Chanelia Hermes' collection.'

I looked excited, but I actually wasn't excited. The recently discovered pieces in Chanelia Hermes' collection didn't really have any special functions, and they all looked the same as well.

Kim Hyun-Sung's first gift to me—Chanelia Hermes' Infinity Bag—had long become dime a dozen in many collection exhibition halls.

The only silver lining here was that I would be able to fill that empty spot in my cabinet, so I decided to act like I was happy and excited about it. After all, I also had to make sure that we would look happy for the onlookers.

I tried to maintain a happy expression because I had to change this strange atmosphere.

However, I smiled naturally upon seeing the food.

I wasn't sure if the chef had put his heart and soul into the dish, but the main dish was perfect, and so was the wine. The staffer's service was great as well… It was to the point that I felt like I had come to a fancy restaurant in Lindel or the Democratic Country.

The atmosphere improved naturally, and we started having normal conversations. It ranged from business to the guild. Kim Hyun-Sung and I spent an hour talking about mundane things while eating.

Afterward, we went to the auction house.

My expectations were low, but the collection pieces had decent functions.

[Chanelia Hermes' Bag of Ascension - Legendary Rank]

[This is one of the masterpieces of a series of bags created centuries ago by the legendary hunter and leather craftsman Chanelia Hermes. It was crafted from unidentified leather. This bag is comfortable to use, and it is also as durable as plate armor because it was made for adventurers. It has a storage expansion function by default. After a certain period of time, the items stored in the bag will rank up without any penalties. If a rank-up is impossible, the item's effect will be amplified. Magic is increased by 3 while equipped.]

'Shit… '

The storage space wasn't as big as the Infinity Bag, but this bag could bestow upon a rank-up to the items inside of it after a certain period of time.

'Damn, it's a good thing that I saw this… '

I highly doubt that it could turn a Semi-Mythic Light Bomb Potion into a Mythic-rank

Light Bomb Potion, but it was still worth it. If it could amplify the effects of both Light Bomb Potion and Dragon Breath Potion, the bag was a must-buy.

Catalysts and Epic-rank potions would benefit as well, and the bag's usefulness was infinite depending on the effects of the items inside of it.

'Even among the Legendary-rank items… '

There were items that could be considered high-quality among Legendary-rank items.

I wasn't interested in most items here, but the bag was worthy of my attention.

'Its usefulness has no borders… '

It would be useful to an archer who would want to carry arrows with them, and it would also be useful to assassins who would want to carry poison around with them.

Of course, it would be extremely useful to people like me who were involved in the production industry.

The bag was so useful that I would buy it with my own money if Kim Hyun-Sung decided not to buy it for me.

'Shit… I should've brought my bag.'

All my money was in my bag, so I hoped that Kim Hyun-Sung had enough money to buy that bag.

The host definitely noticed my anxious look because they immediately started the auction.

The auction participants started to gather.

I swept my gaze across them and saw the archer, who was one of the Eight Seats, and a bunch of people overflowing with money.

They looked pretty anxious when they saw me and Kim Hyun-Sung.

Meanwhile, the other participants were busy raising their signs to bid.

Soon, a bidding war started for the bag, and Kim Hyun-Sung looked nervous as the price climbed even higher. I had an idea why he was anxious. It was probably because the price had exceeded his expectations, or he didn't bring enough money with him.

One could participate in an auction with just the money in their wallet. Anyway, Kim Hyun-Sung continued fighting, and the price of the bag went up like crazy. It didn't take long for the bag's price to exceed five billion won.

'Those unscrupulous bastards… Damn it.'

There were people incessantly raising the price to fight Kim Hyun-Sung, and I couldn't help but think that those people were members of the auction house.

"Fifty thousand gold. Anyone else?" asked the host.

"…"

"Yes! Participant Number 28. Sixty thousand gold," the host exclaimed.

'Hyun-Sung, you carry around a dozen large bills, right?'

"Three hundred thousand gold from Participant Number 11…"

'They increased it so much. Ha… '

Kim Hyun-Sung definitely noticed my nervous look because he raised his sign with determination.

"*Ah…* One million… gold… from Participant Number 28… If there's no one else, the item will belong to Participant Number 28."

The auction hall went quiet.

It was a pretty good item, but I didn't think that it deserved a million gold.

'Kim Hyun-Sung, man… '

I felt like the tiny grudge that I had been holding against him was melting away in real-time, and I couldn't help but realize that a sincere apology would always be

effective.

CHAPTER 544
CONFESSION (1)

'Niceee.'

"It's fine. This is too—"

"Please accept it. It's my way of apologizing to you, and it'll also be useful to you in many ways, Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung begged.

'Hey, do you really think that you can sway me with something like this?! Keep it. Ahem, Geez… '

"But…" I hesitated.

"I'm sure you're going to need it. It's my way of repaying you for the pendant, and you don't have to feel too bad about it. It'll be really helpful," he said.

'If you say so, I guess I have no choice—Ahem.'

It wasn't like I was broke or anything, but gifts would always put me in a good mood. A useless gift was enough to make me feel happy, so I smiled automatically upon being presented with a gift that I could actually use. I wanted to hum, and I felt the same feelings I felt when I received that Infinity Bag from Kim Hyun-Sung.

If I had to exaggerate a bit, this item suited me better than those or that potion at the Sea of Dimensions. This ascendant bag was more valuable than the ring or fusing with Jung Ha-Yan and becoming the two-headed Ha-Yan Ki-Young.

'My precious… '

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that the bag was made for me, and Kim Hyun-Sung definitely noticed my excitement. I was sure that he had been really excited to give me the bag because he gave it to me outright after winning it from the auction.

'I'm sure the organizers of this auction are startled.'

It was normal to wait for an item to be delivered after winning it, but Kim Hyung-Sung didn't even wait for the auction house to deliver the item to him.

'This is why he wanted to come here.'

He looked like he was begging me to accept it. According to the virtue of Koreans, I had to decline him three times. I did just that before *hesitantly* reaching out toward the bag.

"Well, since you've put it like that…" I muttered.

"Thank you," he said.

'Why are you thanking me? It should be me who should thank you… '

My hands and waist felt a bit awkward because I didn't bring my Infinity Bag today, but I finally felt complete. The Chanelia Hermes' Bag of Ascension was apparently created after the Infinity Bag, so the design was more exquisite than the latter.

The space was smaller than my Infinity Bag, but it was big enough for a portable alchemist kit.

'I can upgrade my alchemist kit!'

I wanted to hold in my emotions, but I couldn't suppress my emotions and started laughing.

My laughter made Kim Hyun-Sung look as if he had succeeded in life. Kim Hyun-Sung's mindset back then was that one couldn't buy a person's heart with money and gifts, but I was sure that he had to have changed his mindset after experiencing hardships.

Light Ki-Young wasn't supposed to be greedy, but it couldn't be helped. I was sure that many people wouldn't mind my current expression if I told them that I was happy about his thoughts behind the gift rather than the gift itself.

I was sure that it wouldn't happen, but I gripped the bag tightly as we walked down the streets, looking like I was afraid that it would get snatched away. It was already dark, but Kim Hyun-Sung looked as if he didn't want to go back just yet.

I had no idea what he wanted to do, but his determination was almost palpable, so I was looking forward to it.

'He's determined.'

I was sure that he had been waiting for this moment for a long time. I had been thinking about addressing the elephant in the room because Kim Hyun-Sung kept on postponing his confession, but I started treating his confession as a masterpiece.

I started treating Kim Hyun-Sung as the artisan working on that masterpiece, so I became cautious in my approach. There had been many complications as well. It felt like we were living in a scripted soap opera because we couldn't quite get the timing.

It also seemed like it would take Kim Hyun-Sung a long time to confess because of Park Deok-Gu, the recent incidents, and most importantly, his PTSD.

'The patient one will usually win in a situation like this… '

Haste would make waste, and I couldn't imagine just how nervous Kim Hyun-Sung was feeling inside, even though he looked calm and placid on the outside.

He wasn't really the type to get drunk, but perhaps he thought that he had to get drunk to confess because we started walking toward a hotel.

The events that happened before this was the build-up, and he looked nervous as if the real event was about to start. We were talking about many different things as we walked down the street, but his eyes were darting around, and his lips were trembling.

I could deduce his thoughts, and he was suffering more than anyone could imagine.

'What if he can't accept it?' He was probably thinking this way. He was probably scared that I would get suspicious of him even if I decided to accept his explanation.

He could also mess things up before he could even address the elephant. He was probably thinking that I would be suspicious of his intentions, which would make it even harder for him to confess.

It wasn't really strange that he was thinking that way. After all, we would be talking about his regression here—his second chance at life.

Sure, many unbelievable things had happened so far on this continent, but it would still be difficult for people to believe that he was a regressor.

If someone were to say that to someone else, the latter would definitely start throwing rocks at the former and say that the former was crazy.

Obviously, I was prepared to accept everything, but Kim Hyun-Sung didn't know that, so he looked like he was suffocating beneath the tremendous pressure.

'I should help him out a bit.'

I discreetly cast soundproofing magic and asked, "Is there anything you want to talk about?"

"*Huh?* No, no… I mean. Well, it's nothing like that…" Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

"Maybe it's just me, but you look distracted. I'm sorry if I'm misunderstanding though," I told him.

"No, it's not that—well… I mean, there's something I want to talk to you about. I think it's best to continue the conversation we had back at the restaurant first," he suggested.

'Not that, man.'

His ability to avoid topics was just as fast as his agility.

"I don't know what you think of me, but it wasn't intentional. It was my fault. I had never imagined that you'd react like that," he continued.

"…"

"It's not because I don't trust you. Out of everyone I know, I trust you the most. I know it sounds like an excuse, but I was really worried about your current condition that it clouded my judgment," he added.

"…"

"I didn't lock you up because I didn't trust you. I think you just misunderstood because of the situation outside, but I swear on everything I have that it's not what

you think. I just wanted to protect you from outside threats. I did not lock you up to protect the world from you," he explained.

'That last sentence is touching. I'm touched, Hyun-Sung.'

"I just feel really bad because you trust me a lot, but I couldn't fully trust you," he said.

'That's what I'm talking about.'

"I know this isn't enough for you to forgive me, but I really hope that you'll accept my apology," he requested.

I didn't answer him right away. I pretended like I was avoiding him by moving back slightly, but his apology honestly wasn't that bad. I felt better thanks to the ascension bag, so my good feelings were on Kim Hyun-Sung once more.

He looked at me as if he wanted his words to reach me, and he looked like a prisoner waiting to be punished.

'I should answer him.'

"No, I'm sorry as well."

"*Ah*."

"I completely understand your reaction and feelings, so you didn't have to tell me. I feel bad with your explanation," I told him.

"No, it was definitely my fault," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"No, I think I was just a bit too sensitive," I said.

"…"

"I think we were in a similar situation before… and I'm only telling you this now since it's already water under the bridge, but… I noticed you distancing yourself from me… after the war with the Republic," I said cautiously.

'Yeah, man, you did that. That's why I put on that act about whether I should go to the

Federation or not.'

"That's…" he paused.

Of course, it wasn't Kim Hyun-Sung's fault. Well, If I had to blame someone, it would be his fault, but the root cause was his PTSD. Obviously, there were things that bothered him back then.

It was amusing to see his expression change a few times as he stammered, "W-Wait, that did happen, but right now—"

"Of course, it's already water under the bridge, but at the time, I did feel kind of sad. Looking back at it now, I think that was the reason why I considered moving to the Federation." I interrupted him.

"No, this is my…"

"I'm sorry," I said.

I was apologizing more than the guy who was apologizing to me. It was an embarrassing situation for the one who should apologize. It kind of broke my heart to see Kim Hyun-Sung anxious, but I wanted to keep this position until the end.

"I-I don't know what to say… since you're apologizing to me. At that time… I kept my distance. Well… it's the truth, but… As I said before, I trust you more than anyone, but I have no idea what to say…" he mumbled.

'All right, I'll talk.'

"You don't have to say it like that. You seemed kind of embarrassed because you were bringing up the past again…"

"No! It's not like that. I'm not trying to bring up the past. Right now, I'm regretting why I had that kind of thought… Yeah, I'm actually regretting it. Whenever I'm alone, I would always think about and regret how stupid and immature I am…" he explained.

"What?"

"As I said before, I trust you. I trust you just as much as you trust me. I don't really

know what I'm saying right now, but one thing I'm sure of is that I trust you more than anyone, Mr. Ki-Young," he continued.

I wanted to applaud him for his amazing attitude.

I didn't expect that he would talk about it so quickly because we just started talking, but strangely enough, my emotions were getting stronger.

I couldn't really describe his expression, but he was probably recalling the moment he met me in the world of his consciousness.

Light Ki-Young had shown him the definition of faith back then.

'I was Trust Ki-Young. Yup, I was.'

An idea popped up in my head. It was an idea that would end this lengthy tug-of-war. If Kim Hyun-Sung was currently recalling our moments together in the world of his consciousness, I could just show him the same smile I showed him back then.

Of course, I also had to say the same lines.

"I'm not sure why you're going to this extent, but… you don't have to carry so much burden by yourself."

'Y-You look really nervous.'

"And…"

"…"

"I trust you as well," I told him.

CHAPTER 545
CONFESSION (2)

'This is it. This will work.'

I clenched my fists upon seeing Kim Hyun-Sung's anxious look. He looked really touched upon hearing what I said, and his expression soon became dyed with conviction. I had no idea what exactly he was thinking at the moment, but it seemed like he had finally organized his thoughts.

Of course, I pretended like I didn't notice anything.

Kim Hyun-Sung was the only one who could remember our meeting in the world of his consciousness. Unfortunately, Mr. Light Ki-Young suffered from the aftermath of Doom Ki-Young, so he couldn't remember that beautiful and warm scene at all.

The words that swayed Kim Hyun-Sung's emotions at the time emerged from my mouth once more, and it was a dramatic turn of events.

I looked as if I was saying those words for the first time, so he was swimming in a sea of emotions. I *couldn't* remember it, but he definitely thought that I felt the same way, that I definitely believed in him, and that I was the only person he could trust.

The guilt was boring down his shoulders once more.

'I have to tell him. I have to confess.'

Or…

'I would be betraying Mr. Ki-Young's faith in me if I were to keep hiding it. I have to confess today no matter what.'

His conflicted expression was amusing. I knew it was a bad habit, but I still decided to savor the fruit of my investment. Right now, Kim Hyun-Sung was like an eight-ton truck with broken brakes or a hodling[1] Bitcoiner. He didn't have any brakes, and I was sure he was having a hard time hodling.

'Just say it. Just say it.'

"Yeah… I did. You're… yeah… always…" Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

"What?"

"No, it's nothing. It's…" he trailed off.

'Yeah, Hyun-sung. Damn it, just say it.'

"There's… There's a place I'd like you to visit with me," he requested.

'It's here. It's finally here!.'

"Where?" I asked.

"I know it's a bit sudden, but I'd like you to come with me. I also want to tell you something," he replied.

"…"

There was no turning back. He looked nervous, and his voice was even trembling.

I acted like I had no idea what was going on, and we started walking toward our destination. Heren was enveloped in darkness. There were light orbs illuminating the streets, but Heren was still darker than Lindel. There wasn't much light pollution in Heren, so the stars were more noticeable in the sky, and there was a nice atmosphere between us.

I started thinking that it would be great if there were background music playing while we were walking toward our destination.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"It's not far," Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

"…"

'Has he been here before?'

We were walking out of the city, and it was clear that we weren't heading to Lindel. I thought it would be a place full of memories, but it seemed that we were going somewhere else.

'He's not trying to buy time, right?'

I didn't think that was the case. He was still afraid because he was walking slower than usual, but he had already made up his mind.

As expected, he spoke nervously, "I'm sure… you don't know, but there's actually one more thing I need to apologize to you for, Mr. Ki-Young. It's something else aside from what I've told you before."

"I don't quite understand what you're—you don't have to apologize," I told him.

"You probably won't believe me, and it's definitely going to be surprising. Perhaps you'll be disappointed, but I want you to know that I'm not going to lie to you. I've been hiding it because I have other plans," he explained.

'Yeah, yeah. I understand, Hyun-Sung. I'm the only person who can understand you, and I'll believe everything you tell me, man. I'll believe everything.'

"I don't understand what you're saying. This is so sudden… and you said you were hiding something… You don't have to tell me, and you don't need to share everything with me. I won't be disappointed just because you're hiding your personal issues. I also have a few things that I have a hard time telling people…" I explained.

"It's not that simple. If it were that simple—no, it's different from… the things you have trouble telling people," he said.

'You'll probably pass out if I tell you my secrets… '

"I hope you don't get startled. I want you to listen calmly to what I have to say," he requested.

'All right, I understand. Just tell me already… '

We finally arrived at a small house.

The house was barely big enough for one family. It was located in a small village on

the outskirts of Heren. I immediately realized why Kim Hyun-Sung brought me here.

'It was here.'

I had no idea when, but Kim Hyun-Sung once lived here.

'Did he live in hiding here?'

I was going to hear it anyway, so there was no need for me to make assumptions.

Kim Hyun-Sung's expression was grim as he opened the door to the old house. The house looked abandoned on the outside, but it was pretty clean inside.

He entered quietly and sat on a chair. I noticed his trembling hands and lips. Then, he suddenly got up and prepared tea. I had never seen him like this. He lit the fireplace and lit the candles that would illuminate the house.

Overall, he was quite busy doing other things.

I thought about helping him because I was worried that he would postpone his confession once again, but he looked like he didn't need any help.

"It's a nice house. Is this—" I asked.

"I once lived here a long time ago," Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

"What?"

"For a few months. I don't really remember, but I remember living here… for that long," he said.

"…"

I revealed a puzzled look because Kim Hyun-Sung and I had never been apart.

I was about to ask him what he was talking about, but he looked like he didn't want me to say anything.

'I should just listen.'

I wasn't stupid enough to interrupt his confession.

Kim Hyun-Sung sighed in relief at my reaction. He didn't come right out and tell me that he was a regressor. Surprisingly, he started talking about the time we spent together in the tutorial dungeon.

"I was foolish," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"…"

"E-Even in the tutorial dungeon…"

"…"

"I didn't fight… I was just busy avoiding the monsters. At that time, things were too difficult for me to handle. I had to watch many people die, and I ignored people asking for help by running away," he continued.

"What do you…"

"I-I can't… really remember the faces of those I had abandoned. Survival was the only thing that filled my head, so there were times when I intentionally wanted others to die. I even drove some people to their deaths. I can't count the number of times I felt relieved while telling myself that I would live despite the cries of people crying out to me from the other side of the wall," he explained.

'That's really surprising. He's still bothered about that?'

I wasn't sure, but it was a possibility.

It was true that Kim Hyun-Sung was a good person, but he wasn't an excessively good-natured person, and he definitely wasn't the type to give everything he had to someone else.

It was natural for his humanity or emotions to become worn out before Light Ki-Young's light shone down on him because he had survived his hellish first life and had to start over again reluctantly. If necessary, he wouldn't mind killing people.

He cared more about his own and the party's profits than his moral compass.

'It was hard to understand.'

I couldn't understand why he decided to create a camp for survivors. I couldn't understand why he went so far just to try and save people. I thought he had done that to find Jung Ha-Yan and Jung Jin-Ho, but there was a high chance that his past life had also influenced his decision.

'He didn't lead and conquer dungeons like he's doing right now.'

He was continuously running, and it was the reaction a normal guy in his 20s would show upon arriving at an unknown place. It was a more convincing story than a guy shouting that he had become the chosen one.

'This is really fun.'

It was possible that both Kim Hyun-Sung and I had one thing in common in our past lives—driving people to their deaths.

"I survived because I was lucky, but it was really difficult," he continued.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung, I'm sorry, but… I don't understand what you're saying. You definitely…"

"Yes, I participated in the attack team with the party members in the tutorial dungeon, but it wasn't like that before," he said.

"…"

"A-Are you disappointed?" he asked.

"No. I don't really understand, but… I'm sure you only did what you had to do," I answered.

'Well, it would be a different story if I were the victim.'

"I'm glad," he said.

He looked a bit relieved, and I was convinced that he had been worried about what I would think of him after he said those things to me.

'Did you want to make a good impression in front of me? Good boy.'

"More importantly… you said before, so when… was that exactly? Did you experience the tutorial dungeon twice?" I asked.

"No, it's not like that. Well, I did experience it twice, but it's not what you think. So… So… I…" he hesitated.

"…"

"I've experienced this world once before meeting you, Mr. Ki-Young," he confessed.

"…"

"I'm a regressor," he added.

I clenched my fists unknowingly, and I didn't forget to act cautiously.

I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung as if I was questioning what he was talking about.

The regressor's eyes looked determined because he was convinced that I would believe him. He looked as if he was reminiscing about the past, and even though I couldn't deduce his expression, Kim Hyun-Sung could deduce my expression.

I made sure that he would be able to deduce my expression because I was just an ordinary person in his eyes. I had to act like I was in disbelief, and then I had to act like there was no reason for Kim Hyun-Sung to lie to me.

My expression was changing in real time, and our regressor's hands were trembling.

"I'm… I'm a regressor," he said.

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1. Hodling is the act of purchasing bitcoin, or any other cryptocurrency, holding it and refusing to sell it while attempting to remain unaffected by swings in price ☜

CHAPTER 546
CONFESSION (3)

"I-I'm a regressor," Kim Hyun-Sung confessed.

"…"

'Why are your hands shaking? I know you don't have hand tremors.'

I knew he was anxious about all this, and he looked like a criminal who was waiting for his sentence. He looked like he was contemplating whether he had made the right decision or not, and he probably wanted to turn back time to postpone his confession once more.

I didn't say anything. I acted like I was in deep contemplation, which made him feel even more anxious.

I knew that he was going to confess, but it wouldn't hurt to delay my reaction.

'I'm a regressor.'

Wow.

'I'm a regressor.'

Geez.

Those words were so pleasant in my ears. I had suffered a lot just to hear those words, and it would be petty for me to do this, but I had to take revenge. I remained silent because it would increase his anxiety. Of course, I wasn't doing this because I had a fetish for harassing people. His anxious face just made me feel better for some reason.

"Ah, is that right? You're actually a regressor? That explains the strange things I noticed. Hahaha. Things should work out smoothly from now on. Amazing. I'd expect nothing less from you." I was sure that he didn't expect me to say those words.

However, my silence was probably the worst-case scenario for him.

I knew I was right because he stood up and walked over to me to try and fix the situation because I was really astounded by his confession. He was probably thinking about telling me that he was just pulling my leg.

I was still trying to *process* the information that he had just told me when Kim Hyun-Sung placed his hand on my shoulder.

I decided to prank him by pushing his hand away, and I heard him gasp.

I glanced at him to check his reaction, but his expression was indescribable.

'Damn it… I really shouldn't play any more jokes on him.'

He looked as if he had lost everything, and he looked even more discouraged than when I met him in the world of his consciousness. The life in his eyes left him at a speed visible to the naked eye, and he looked like he was going to hang himself.

'I can't play any jokes on him.'

I got worried that he would return and hide in the world of his consciousness once more, so I hurriedly spoke, "*Ah*, sorry. I was just… shocked."

"It's fine. I… I… I… *Um*… I…" Kim Hyun-Sung stammered and went quiet like Jung Ha-Yan. I was sure that he had no idea what he was saying, and he was definitely just talking instinctively because his soul had already left his body.

Of course, he soon came back to his senses. Kim Hyun-Sung had matured mentally compared to before the previous incident, so he managed to compose himself quickly.

He seemed afraid to let things end like this, so he hurriedly said, "I understand that it's hard to believe, and I'm sure you're shocked. I'm not lying to you, and I never had any intentions of deceiving you. I told myself every time that I should tell you soon, but I thought you would have a hard time accepting it. I'm sorry."

'No, Hyun-Sung. Why would I think it's rude? I feel good. Relax.'

"…"

“I-I’m telling the truth,” he stuttered.

“There’s something I’d like to ask…” I said.

“Sure. I can answer everything,” he said.

“If you’re really a regressor…” I trailed off.

“Yes?”

“Did you and I work together back then as well?” I asked.

“No, we didn’t. In my past life, you…” he trailed off.

“In that case… in the tutorial dungeon… is there a reason why you approached me…” I asked.

“No!” he shouted.

His shout startled me, and I was sure that his shout just now was the loudest yell of his lifetime.

Even Kim Hyun-Sung was surprised by his own shout, but he definitely thought that an explanation was the priority.

He was aware of what I was worried about, so he quickly explained, “That’s definitely not the case. I didn’t approach you because I had an ulterior motive. It was all a coincidence.”

‘Yeah, that’s true. At that time, you came to find Ha-Yan.’

“It really was a coincidence. We didn’t make contact in my past life. This is my first time meeting you. I can swear on my life,” he said.

I almost laughed because it didn’t even take him two seconds to say all that, but I made sure to look all serious and grim while staring at him.

Just like how I wanted to hide the fact that I had approached Kim Hyun-Sung intentionally, he probably didn’t want me to think that way about him.

Even if he had approached me intentionally because we had made some kind of connection in our past lives, it wasn't a good thing to say that here because it would undermine our current relationship.

I nodded, but Kim Hyun-Sung still looked nervous.

"I trust you," I told him.

"What?"

"I trust you," I repeated.

"Really…" he asked.

"I'm sure you have a reason for telling me all this, and I believe that you have a reason for hiding it all this time. Of course, I'm surprised and a bit disappointed—no, a bit isn't really a bit, but it's the truth. I trust you, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I replied.

'Awww, our Hyun-Sung is touched. Why are you so touched?'

"How can you… accept it… so easily?" he asked.

'It's not easy, Hyun-Sung. It took you a really long time to tell me.'

"It's all because you don't really have a reason to lie to me. I had already told you that I trusted you. Anyway, it seems that my burning questions are finally answered. I knew you were unique when I first saw you, and it seems that I was right all this time.

"You've also done a few things that didn't make sense like bringing Ye-Ri to the guild or recruiting Miss Hye-Jin," I answered.

"I worked with Miss Hye-Jin before, and it's the same for Ye-Ri," he commented.

"So our meeting in the tutorial dungeon was really just a coincidence…" I muttered.

"Yes. Honestly, I was trying to find Miss Ha-Yan, but… I was surprised to see you and Mr. Deok-Gu there because I had never seen the two of you before," he said.

"About us…" I asked.

“I’ve never seen you two. I think you two either failed to clear the tutorial dungeon, or you were in a completely different region. You may have also died in a dungeon, and p-perhaps you were one of the people I-I had to abandon,” he stuttered.

“That makes sense,” I commented.

“What?”

“When we first encountered the monsters in the tutorial dungeon…” I said.

“Yes?”

“You were the one who saved my life,” I told him.

“*Ah…*”

“If it hadn’t been for you, Deok-Gu and I would’ve died in the tutorial dungeon. As you mentioned earlier, I would have died if you had decided to run away immediately. I have always been thankful for that, and I’m even more thankful. My life…” I paused.

“Yes?”

“You saved my life,” I continued.

“*Ah…*”

‘This guy is deeply touched. He’s probably going to cry if I continue.’

Those words weren’t really special, but they probably had a different meaning in his ears.

“I know it sounds ridiculous, but I feel like I should thank you again,” I told him.

“No, it’s fine. I have more things I need to thank you for. I-I hope you don’t think that way. As I mentioned earlier, I…”

“You don’t have to feel guilty. It wasn’t your fault that you had to abandon me and run away from the monsters in the tutorial dungeon in your past life. I’ve also seen the deaths of many people in the tutorial dungeon. I ignored the people being eaten by

the monsters, and I ran away as well just to live. I don't think people should criticize others who are only prioritizing their own survival," I explained.

"…"

"If you're still bothered…" I trailed off.

"Yes?"

"This sounds funny, but… I forgive you for abandoning me back then," I continued.

'I forgive your sins.'

"Mr. Ki-Young…" he muttered.

'He looks like he's going to cry.'

Who would think that Kim Hyun-Sung was a cold-hearted man? He was obviously a crybaby. Kim Hyun-Sung looked as if he didn't know what to say anymore, so I quickly went straight to the point while he was still stewing in his own emotions.

"So, what made you want to tell me this?"

"It's… It's something that's been bothering me for a long time. Of course, I had my own reasons, but I thought it'd be best to tell you. It was also a huge burden, so I feel like I've put down some of that burden," he replied.

"…"

"It'll be a long story," he added.

"I guess we'll be up all night," I commented.

"It's not something we can finish talking about in one day… so whenever we have time, I can tell you… little by little since we have a lot of time right now. I'll tell you whenever we have time or whenever you're curious about something," he suggested.

'Yeah, it's at least a decade of information… so there's no way you can tell me everything in one day. All right, I'll let you do whatever you want.'

“I’ll start by telling you the things I couldn’t tell you earlier while we drink tea,” he said.

“…”

Just like that, Kim Hyun-Sung continued talking.

It was about his past life from his point of view rather than mine.

He sometimes looked calm, but there were times when he looked like he was about to cry. It seemed like he had experienced a lot more things than I had imagined.

I wanted him to talk about the key points, but I didn’t want him to do that at the same time because I was afraid of making him recall those painful memories.

He talked as if he was pouring out everything he could remember, and he even talked about things that could be considered his weakness. He talked about it all. I listened to his story calmly without asking any questions or cutting him off.

His voice was trembling as he talked, and he couldn’t even talk properly because he was choking up. He wasn’t all that different from earlier, and the information I was already aware of wasn’t all that different either.

There wasn’t an issue in the overall flow of the story, but I still couldn’t help but tighten my fist.

I was starting to get engrossed in his story.

The story about how he had to abandon the people in the tutorial dungeon to survive, his life as an adventurer, and the story of how he ended up joining the Blue Guild—they were all interesting.

CHAPTER 547
THE TUTORIAL IS STARTING (1)

[The tutorial is starting.]

"*Uh… uh?*"

I[1] looked around slowly

"*Huh?* Where am I… What's going on?"

I looked around and found myself in a dark building. The place was completely unfamiliar to me. The building's interior was filled with grotesque patterns and letters that I couldn't comprehend. I couldn't see anyone else aside from the people who had arrived here with me.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I wasn't sure why I was here. All I could remember was receiving a strange message while I was working on a school assignment. I could remember responding to that message, and that was about it.

"W-Where am I?"

"Don't ask me. I-I don't know either."

"A-Are there others here? Where… and why are there swords and weapons?"

"Do you think we'd be here if we knew that? I think we're all in the same situation. Do you guys remember anything?"

"Hello! Is anyone there? Hello!"

I wasn't the only one who was scared. I was baffled because I could hear an unfamiliar voice. I grabbed my head in pain because that voice was definitely coming from my head, but I couldn't make the voice disappear.

I wasn't sure if we got kidnapped to participate in some kind of test, but one thing I was sure of was that I had to survive.

The voice was telling me that I had to survive. It was telling me that I would live if I overcame the tutorial dungeon. There was water, food, essential items, a weapon's rank and attributes, jobs, monsters, and a status window.

It felt like I was in a game world.

'Could I be dreaming?'

Perhaps I was in a really vivid dream.

"Help me!"

"P-Please get me out. Please…"

"Stop joking around and open the door. I'll sue all of you! I'll sue! Hurry up and open the door!"

"*Heung… heung…* Please save me. Please…"

"I'm going to call the cops!"

"Grab a weapon! Can't you hear what's going on outside? Grab a weapon!"

"You! Grab a weapon! Grab a shield or something. Hurry up!"

"What are you doing?! Stop that nonsense!"

"This isn't a joke! Can't you see the status window? Hurry up and get a weapon! Hey mister! Does this look like a joke?"

"…"

"Everyone, nothing will change if we remain in denial. We should take care of ourselves before anything else. I heard the cries of beasts outside. It doesn't matter if this is a hidden camera prank or a dream, we have to do something. Grab a weapon, everyone. We have to resist them."

“Stop joking!”

“It’s not a joke. I don’t like playing jokes like this, and I really hope that all this is just a joke. Please grab a weapon for now. If it really is a joke, we can deal with it by then.”

Unfortunately, the scene was too realistic for it to be a dream.

The sensation of the cold wall against my back and the cacophony of voices—no, it didn’t matter whether this was a dream or reality.

The man was right.

We had to grab a weapon to protect ourselves.

I headed for the weapons to grab a weapon for myself.

Swoosh!

An item flew toward me from somewhere.

It was a large wooden shield.

“Hey, handsome guy. Take that. That shield should help.”

“T-Thank you s-so… hyung…” I said.

“There’s no need to thank me. It’s not even mine. Hey lady, you should come over here and grab a shield as well. I’m not sure whether this is a joke or not, but we should get ready to fight,” the man suggested.

‘He’s a nice man.’

I turned and found him talking to a man with a large frame while holding a spear himself. The man who had been comforting the others just a few moments ago had become the center of the group, and he was giving orders to the others.

‘We can survive… I think we can do it.’

I heard ominous beast noises outside, but a grown man and a woman with weapons were ready to face them.

If we join forces, we should be able to fight those beasts.

“People with shields stand in the front. The people with spears will watch your back. We should be able to take care of a few beasts that come our way.”

“Okay!”

“Don’t think about anything else. Just think about getting out of this situation. Alright, lead the way. Hey you, go to the front or hand the shield to someone else.”

“No, the shield…”

“Why are you holding it if you’re not going to use it? Stand in front of the others. You, too. Hey, hurry up and go.”

Those with shields were hesitating, but I could understand their feelings. They could protect themselves with their shields, but who would readily stand in front to protect strangers? It was the same for me.

If no one had urged me to stand in front of the others, I would have stayed in the middle of the crowd.

[The starting point will unlock momentarily. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.]

[The starting point is unlocking. Good luck, everyone.]

The stone gate opened, and screams pervaded the air.

It all happened in the blink of an eye.

“*Kyaaaah!*”

Grotesque-looking monsters charged toward us—humans.

Crack!

"*Huh? Uh… Uhh?*"

A grotesque noise echoed as blood splattered all over my face.

My mind stopped working, and I couldn't make a rational decision.

My legs gave out, causing me to collapse.

I was having a hard time breathing.

I was in the middle of pandemonium.

I watched as the unknown beasts ate the people alive, and I couldn't quite describe the chaos unfolding in front of me. The people who had courageously picked up their weapons to fight had thrown their weapons away to run.

Some of them had been surrounded by those monsters.

'We're going to die… W-We're all going to die. Mom… mom…!'

"Save me! Please help me! Over here!!"

"Run!"

"*Huh? Huh? Huh?*"

"You damn pig! Run! Can't you hear me?!"

"*Kyaaaaah!*"

"Help me! Help me!!"

"Run! Damn it… Run already!!"

'I have to get out of here.'

That was the only way I would survive. I hurriedly stood up and saw bags filled with water and food.

"B-Bro! Where are we going?!"

“Grab the rations!”

I instinctively moved to grab one of the bags upon hearing that voice, but someone else also grabbed the same bag that I grabbed. I hesitated because the woman was crying, but she collapsed to the ground while we were pulling the bag.

“I-I’m sorry—”

A few monsters bit her neck and tore her apart, interrupting my apology.

“*Ah… Ahhh…*”

“H-Help… me…”

“*Ahhhhh!!! Ah…* I-I’m… I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

I vomited, but I started moving away out of instinct. I saw people running through the large exit, so I thought about following them, but my feet refused to move.

I waved my shield while biting my lips, and I eventually saw an opening through the crowd.

‘I… I have to get out of here. I’ll die if I stay here.’

A man who was being chased by a monster was running toward me.

I waved my shield while screaming. “Don't come! Don’t come! Don’t come here!” I yelled.

‘Don’t come! Please… Please don’t come here!’

Thud!

There was a dull thud. I saw the man fall, but I immediately looked away. I could only assume that he was still alive because I could still hear his voice.

“*Wow*… I almost died. Shit.”

I was running out of breath, but I couldn’t stop running. All I did was run while looking forward, but the exit was still far away. I felt someone grab my ankle, they

were asking for help, but…

“Help…”

“Let go! L-Let go of me!” I screamed.

“Please…”

“Let go…!” I shouted.

I kicked the hand around my ankle and moved forward.

There were screams everywhere, and I could hear people crying for help amidst the excited shrieks of the monsters.

‘Please… please… ’

The exit was close, but there were many people in front of it.

I raised my shield and rammed it into the crowd. The crowd collapsed, but I didn’t have the luxury to look back at them because my priority was my own survival.

A monster was stuck to my shield, so I let go of the shield and started running with all my might.

Soon, I saw a cave. It was dark, but I could see paths inside of it.

A few monsters started chasing after me, so I cowered. However, the monsters ignored me and went inside the cave.

I couldn’t help but release a sigh of relief. I started running away once more, and I saw people stretching their hands toward me. They were begging me not to leave. They were begging me to save them.

“Save… me.”

“I’m… sorry,” I mumbled.

“Come back! Come back! You bastard!”

“I-I’m sorry. *Heuk…* I’m sorry. I’m really sorry,” I repeated.

I kept crying. I was running out of breath, and I started to feel dizzy.

Perhaps it was because of the blood on me, but the air smelled rusty.

“*Haa… haa…”*

I had no destination in mind. I was only running to run as far away from those monsters as possible. I had no idea where I was as well, but I couldn’t rest until I found a safe spot. I had been running until my heart felt like it was going to explode from the exertion, but I could still hear screams nearby.

‘I need to go far away. I need to go to a place with no monsters.’

Otherwise, I would die. I wasn’t sure how long I had been running, but I eventually saw a small crack. It was so small that it could only fit a few people. I lay down and wiggled into the small crack.

I used the rocks inside the crevice to cover the entrance, and that was when I collapsed.

‘It’s not a dream… dream… ’

“No…” I mumbled.

The injuries all over me proved that I wasn’t dreaming. Many different thoughts were popping up in my mind, and I started recalling the faces of those I had to leave behind.

The woman who fell after I tugged at the bag of rations, the man who grabbed my ankle, and the people who were screaming for help while they were being eaten alive. The thoughts rose to a crescendo until I had to vomit in a corner of the tiny space I was in.

“*Bleeeeeeeeeck!*”

“*Blech…* Mooom… *Kgh… Heuk…”*

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m really sorry… I’m sorry. *Heuk*, mom, mom… Someone, please

help me! Someone, please get me out of here…!" I begged.

I cried and cried, but no one answered me.

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1. Kim Hyun-Sung's POV ☜

CHAPTER 548
THE TUTORIAL IS STARTING (2)

I[1] couldn't tell because I didn't have a watch, but I thought it had been four days since we arrived here. Of course, this was just a guess based on my feelings. I slept about three times a day, so I was probably right.

'I'm hungry. Is it time to eat? How long has it been since I last ate?'

It felt like it had been eight hours since I last ate.

I opened my bag and saw food and water, but I wasn't sure if I could call myself lucky.

I examined the amount of food that I had and nodded. If I ate sparingly, this amount of food would last me ten days—no, perhaps even more than that. If I ate the bread once a day, little by little, I could probably make it last for 30 days.

I had seen people who had survived on nothing but water for weeks on the Internet and on the television, but I had food that would last me a long time, so my situation was better than theirs.

However…

'…they didn't have to face any monsters.'

It wasn't just the dangerous monsters. I was also in an environment that turned humans into monsters. Some of them were killing each other for food, while some had lost their humanity and were cornering people to kill them for some reason.

I even heard people fighting outside yesterday.

I couldn't really say that I was still human. I had become a monster for ignoring so many people and running out of pandemonium. My stomach seemed like it was trying to dampen the volume of the shame that I was feeling by rumbling incessantly.

And that was when I heard a voice outside…

“I-I-Is there… s-s-someone there?”

“…”

“C-Could I… enter? I’m really hungry and tired. Please…”

“…”

“Please. I beg you. Please…”

I covered my ears.

“I-I think there are monsters… nearby. Please help me.”

“…”

I knew I had to help them. I told myself that I should help them and that I shouldn’t ignore them, but my heart couldn’t help but turn cold.

I had to survive.

‘This crevice isn’t big enough for two people. I don’t have much food left, and they might be a bad person. They might try to take my stuff… No, not might… I’m sure they will… ’

“…”

“…”

The woman asking for help disappeared.

I was sure she had given up or thought that there was no one inside here.

She could’ve been talking to herself as well. Yeah, she was probably doing that because she was tired. I looked up while nibbling on my bread, but I couldn’t see anything else other than a dark ceiling.

‘I had no choice.’

I had no idea how much longer I had to endure for this pandemonium to end, but I

had to stay here for as long as possible.

I had to be cruel to survive. In fact, that was the only reason why I was still alive.

I remained quiet and buried the voices that were asking for help deep in my heart.

Another day passed, but I decided not to spend my days just sitting still.

I started thinking because I felt like I would have a mental breakdown if I didn't start thinking. I would open the status window, and I would even guess the genders of the faint voices outside. Of course, I wouldn't get a definitive answer, but it reminded me that all this wasn't a dream.

I could still remember that voice telling me that this was a tutorial dungeon. I had no idea what was going to happen once we were done here, but it was less likely that we would get to go home. In that sense, I thought perhaps I had to level up or something, but how could I jump into pandemonium when I ran away from it in the first place?

I had been thinking about going outside several times a day, but I was scared. The image of corpses rolling around in puddles of blood and people screaming had been engraved in my head.

I had never really fought before, so I couldn't go outside and fight those monsters as if I had been training for this my entire life. I could become a bit courageous with a weapon, but there was no way there would be a weapon in a place like this.

I had already thrown away the shield that I had been wielding prior to getting into this crevice.

It was also unreasonable to fight those monsters without a weapon.

In the end, I was back to square one. I munched on a piece of bread that was in the bag and thought about how nice it would be if I woke up at home the next day.

It seemed that another day had passed. Last night, I heard people being chased by monsters, and I naturally didn't move from my crevice. I had blocked the entrance, but there was no guarantee that the monsters wouldn't find me and come in here.

"Rationalization…" I knew that I was simply rationalizing my actions. I lowered my

head, thinking that it couldn't be helped.

And that was when I heard a strange voice…

"I think there's someone in here."

"What are you saying?"

"Be quiet for a second."

"O-Okay…"

"…"

"…"

I hurriedly covered my mouth. I started to get worried that they could hear my faint breathing. For some reason, they didn't sound friendly, and they were probably working together with that Jung Jin-Ho guy. If they discovered that I was here and that I had food, they would definitely harass me.

I didn't hear any more voices, so I thought that they had already departed like that woman.

I exhaled, but…

"See, I told you there's someone inside."

"…"

"I think they entered the crevice through this hole. They got lucky. It's blocked, so they probably blocked it from the inside. I think they've been hiding in there for many days now, so they definitely have food…"

"…"

"I know you're in there, so you don't have to hide like a rat…"

"…"

“I said I know you’re hiding in there. Are you going to keep hiding in there, *huh?* All right, let’s see who will give up first. I don’t know how long you’ve been hiding in there, but the monsters out here—we call them Agwi.

”They’re really good at smelling rotten corpses. There just happens to be a bunch of corpses nearby, and I really want to see how long you’ll survive if we shove those corpses in there.

”Once they get closer, they’ll probably pick up your scent as well. In other words, they will surely find out that you’re in there.”

“…”

“They would come here to eat corpses, but a living human would end up filling their bellies. How long do you think you’re going to last there? A few Agwis are enough to break your barricade of stones. Don’t even think that they can’t crawl into this crevice of yours…”

“…”

“Hoh? I don’t see any other exits as well. All right, have a great time with the Agwis. We will be on our way now.”

“…”

“Don’t regret it. You chose this.”

“…”

“All right, we’re leaving.”

“W-Wait…! Hold on. I’m here. I’m… I’m in here,” I stuttered.

“That’s right.”

“Please spare me. Please… spare… don’t attack me. I just want to keep—”

“No one asked, and I’m honestly not interested… More importantly, I want to have a more productive conversation. You have food, right?”

“I-I don’t…” I replied.

“Looks like you’re the type of person who sucks at lying. Okay, let’s do this, then. We’ll believe your answer since I’m a nice guy.

”However, you’re going to have to give us something from that rat hole. Whether it’s food or water, I want you to give us whatever you have. Understand?”

“I-I really don’t have anything. Really… I don’t. I don’t have weapons, and I l-lost my shield… I really don’t have anything. I’m hungry as well. Really,” I told them.

“If you don’t give us anything, the Agwis will soon come here. Don’t just fill your own stomach, man. I don’t really like talking, so I’ll tell you one more thing, bro. I don’t compromise.”

“But…”

“I’ll give you exactly five seconds. Five.”

‘What should I do? What do I do?’

“Four…”

‘Should I give it to him? Should I really?’

“Three…”

‘If I lose this… what will happen to me?’

“Two…”

I had no other choice, so I decided to take two-thirds of my food and pushed it out of the crevice’s small hole along with the bag.

“Good job. You made the right choice,” said the man, sounding satisfied.

“*Heuk…*”

“But you know…”

"*Huh?*"

"This isn't a lot of food…"

'T-This bastard… '

"I think I heard you taking something out of the bag. Do you really think that I'm a fool?"

"I-I really don't have much. That's all I have, and I won't even last three days with this," I told them.

"That's not my problem. If it's three days' worth of food, you can easily ration it for ten days. You're going to stay there, anyway, right? We need high-calorie food since we're going around killing Agwis.

"You don't need that kind of food, right? Give us more. It's not like I'm an inconsiderate jerk. If you give me the remaining food, I'll give you a weapon. How about a sword?"

"I-I don't need it," I replied.

"You won't lose anything by having a weapon. Anyway, if you have anything left, give it to us. However, this will be your last chance. If I'm not satisfied with your offer, this will be the end of our trade. Think about who's at a disadvantage between us. I guarantee that starving to death is less painful than being torn apart by those monsters."

"…"

I decided to give another third—no, his last sentence frightened me, so I had no choice but to give him half of my bread.

"*Hm…*"

'Please… '

"Well, this is good enough since you'll come crawling out once you get hungry. I'll give you a weapon, bro. I don't feel comfortable saying this, but if it gets really difficult, you can kill yourself with that. I've seen many people do that."

The man handed me a sword that was a bit longer than a dagger. It would be more appropriate to call it a dagger. However, I was actually looking forward to using it.

I couldn't help but chuckle hollowly to myself.

'That dirty bastard.'

"It was a satisfactory trade, sir."

"A-Are you leaving now?" I asked.

"Of course. Did you really think that I'll kill you after getting most of your food? See ya."

"…"

"What? Does age really matter here? Shut up! I've seen kids working with that murderer. Do you want to talk about age in front of those kids?"

"…"

I wasn't sure what happened, but it sounded like he had a disagreement with someone in the group. I heard someone shouting furiously, and a sword, as well as a piece of bread, rolled toward me through the small hole in the crevice.

"You're lucky."

"What?"

"My comrade said that he felt heartbroken by the fact that you're stuck in here. Stay in there for a bit and come out once you're comfortable with it. If you can afford it, don't go north.

"After killing a few of those monsters, you'll obtain a job. I'm sure you'll get used to all of this. Anyway, the nearby Agwis have already been killed. I would love to take you with me if I could… but we're in a bad situation. I also can't take a kid with me…"

"I'm not… a kid," I retorted softly.

"How old are you?"

“Twenty-two.”

“Your name?”

“K-Kim Hyun-Sung.”

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1. Kim Hyun-Sung’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 549
THE TUTORIAL IS STARTING (3)

"It's a good name."

"…"

"…"

"Anyway, it's best if you move west since I heard that a few survivors have gathered there. They're a bit uneasy there, so I'm not sure if they'll accept you, but it's better than being stuck here because you will eventually run out of food."

"…"

"No, I'm not going to take him with me. The two of us barely have enough food. And I don't have the energy to take care of someone else aside from you."

"…"

"He's useless, anyway. Why should we take in a guy who hasn't done anything else other than hiding and running away from all this?"

"…"

"*Whoo…*"

"…"

"Hyun-Sung."

"Yes?" I[1] answered.

"Do you want to come with us?"

"…"

The offer was so surprising that I could only keep my mouth shut.

'What should I do?'

The first thought I had was if I could really trust the guys on the other side of the wall. I thought they were bad guys, but I couldn't feel any serious hostility from them.

'This is my only chance to get out of here.'

I just had to be courageous…

I just had to take a step forward, and I would be outside. However, I couldn't really trust them because they took my food away. I was worried that they would try to take the rest of my food after baiting me out of my crevice.

There was also a chance that they were simply trying to let my guard down by handing me a small sword and a piece of bread. They were aware that I still had food, so it wouldn't be strange that they were just baiting me out.

He had mentioned fighting monsters, so they probably didn't hesitate to swing their swords and kill people.

However…

'…What if they're good people?'

They took my food, but they did give me a small sword in exchange. They also didn't take all my food. It was more like they were strange rather than bad people. His friend was also friendly to me for some reason…

'I'll ask a few questions.'

And if I fail to see any red flags, I would consider going outside.

"Have you… killed people… after coming here?" I asked.

"What's up with that question?"

"J-Just because…" I replied.

“If we did, are you going to stay in there? If I thought about harming you from the start, what do you think I would have done? Does your question really matter?”

“S-Still… this is an important question,” I stuttered.

“I didn’t mean to do it, but I killed about three or four people… Yesterday was the first time I killed people… I think our bro here got bothered about it.”

“…”

“You’re the same, Hyun-Sung. Have you heard of the Good Samaritan Law? I saw nearby corpses that looked like they just died recently. I dare you to tell me that you didn't hear their screams. Got an excuse for that?”

“That’s…”

“I’m pretty sure you heard them… You definitely covered your eyes and ears. You ignored the screams of dying people begging for help. That is why you’re still alive. Do you really think that you’re any different from the people around here?

”Personally, I think you’re shittier than others. Bastards rationalize to make themselves feel better—the ones who run away and don’t make any decisions are the most cowardly and the shittiest people out there… Do you understand what I’m saying?”

“That’s not what I meant… That’s… not what I meant. It’s not…” I muttered.

“This ruined my mood. Damn it. We’re leaving, man. Go ahead and stay there for hundreds and thousands of years. I’ll give you a few warnings, though, bro.”

“…”

“If you really don’t want to die, come outside and kill these monsters. We have no idea what’s waiting for us after this tutorial dungeon is over. I think it’s naive to think that we would face the same conditions we faced in this tutorial dungeon in our next dungeon.

”If you want to survive, you need to swing something. That’s the rule here. I’m telling you to hunt while the beginner hunting grounds are still open. Anyway… I’ll see you next time if you’re still alive. That probably won’t happen, though. Thanks for the

food, bro."

"*Ah… Ah!* W-Wait, hyung!" I called out.

I called out to him, but I couldn't hear anything anymore.

All I could do was punch the ground in frustration.

'Shit, shit… '

It was my only chance of getting out of this crevice.

I really couldn't tell if I would be safe with those people, but it was still an opportunity.

No, it wasn't too late yet. If I were to go out now, I could still catch up to them. I quickly stood up and tried to squeeze through the small opening, but I couldn't quite move for some reason.

It was scary, and I couldn't quite describe the sense of dread.

I couldn't even trust myself, so how could I trust other people?

It was the same for the useless questions I had asked earlier. Perhaps I just needed a reason not to go outside, and that was probably why I asked those questions. He was right. I wasn't any different from them. I hadn't killed any people with my own hands, but I was a monster for ignoring those people.

I ignored the screams and ignored that woman.

The fact that I only had this much food left was probably my divine punishment for it.

God was punishing me because I was selfish.

If I had known I would end up wasting my food like this… I would have shared it with other people.

"*Heuk… heuk…* Mom…!"

How did I end up like this? I had no idea how I ended up being stuck here.

If I had helped the man who grabbed my ankle, would there have been any changes?

No, perhaps things could have changed if I had given the bag to that woman who had grabbed it at the same time as me. Many things could have changed if I had stayed there and fought with the others until the bitter end.

If I had run out of this crevice upon hearing the cries of those who were about to die, I was sure that I wouldn't feel so guilty right now.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry… *Kgh…!*" I repeated.

'I'll give you a weapon, bro. I don't feel comfortable saying this, but if it gets really difficult, you can kill yourself with that. I've seen many people do that."

I suddenly remembered his words, and I turned to find a small sword.

I couldn't quite see my reflection because it was dark, but I saw my face once I brought the small sword closer to my face.

It was a grotesque face.

The man was right.

Perhaps death would be better for me because I wouldn't have to live a life full of guilt.

I slowly placed the small sword against my neck.

I just had to put a bit of strength into the small sword, and that would be the end. I would be free from all the pain.

I felt a stinging sensation, and blood started rolling down my neck. My hand was trembling, and I couldn't quite breathe. I thought it was going to be over once I put some strength into it, but it was tremendously difficult to take that leap into the abyss.

Actually…

"*Kgh,* Mom…" I cried.

I didn't want to die.

I was afraid of dying in a place like this.

In the end, I dropped the small sword and started crying on the floor.

I was a cowardly bastard who couldn't take even his own life. It was a dirty bastard who was trying to survive until the end of the pandemonium.

I was a piece of shit, a cowardly bastard, a maggot, and an irredeemable human trash.

"*Kgh… Heuk…"*

And that was when I heard noises from outside…

"…"

"Hyung? Is that you, hyung? That's you, right?" I asked.

"*Keugh…"*

"Hyung! I-I'll come out. I want to come out. I'm coming with you, hyung! 'll come out right now! It was my fault earlier! Please take me with you! I want to go with you!" I begged.

"*Keeeeeeh!*"

"*Ah… Ahhhhh…"*

"*Kyaaaaaaaaaaaah!*"

"*Aaaaah!* S-Save me. Save me. S-Someone save me, please. Save…!" I screamed.

"*Kyah!*"

"Save me. *Kegh…* Save me. Someone please…" I repeated.

The rocks I used to block the entrance started moving. I wasn't sure how a monster found me, but I couldn't help but remember what the man had told me earlier.

"Anyway… I'll see you next time if you're still alive. That probably won't happen, though."

I couldn't help but start thinking that perhaps he had lured that monster here. I tried to block the small entrance with random things to prevent the monster from coming in, but I was too weak to do it.

"Save me. Save… Hyung! It's my fault, so please help me. I'll give you all of my food. *Ahh…* Hyung! Hyuuung!" I shouted.

Whose help was I asking for? No one was here. I ignored those who were crying for help, so why would people help me?

Crack!

There was a loud noise, and my blockade broke.

I saw a monster trying to crawl in through the small opening.

My eyes landed on my small sword rather than on my food.

'I need to kill it.'

"*Kyaaaaaaah!*"

"Die! D-Die!" I shouted.

It couldn't really be called a fight because I simply stabbed the head of the Agwi that dared to try and barge into my crevice. The repulsive feedback that my sword was giving me as I pierced their heads kept on hitting me, but I couldn't stop.

I had to make sure that it was dead, but I didn't have the luxury to check because I couldn't think straight anymore from the pressure.

"*Kgh… Heuk…* Die! Dieee…! You monster. Monster!" I yelled.

"*Keegh…*"

"*Ha… ha… ha…*"

I breathed a sigh of relief when the Agwi finally stopped moving, but I couldn't stop here. I had no other choice but to get out of this crevice. Someone had already found my crevice, so someone else would soon discover it as well.

If that man had sent this Agwi here, then I was in danger here.

The overwhelming emotions that had gripped my heart from killing a living being for the very first time were still surging in my heart. I collapsed, and the stench of the monster's blood filled my nose.

I gripped my small sword in case it was still alive.

"I have to survive on my own…" I mumbled.

'I can't trust anyone.'

"I'm not being selfish. That's how… everyone lives. That's how everyone survived. That's the reason why the people who are still alive… are still alive. That's the reason why hyung—no… that man is still alive," I said.

No one would help me even if I asked for help because I was a monster as well.

What could have happened if I had followed that man just now? I could have died right there and then upon coming out of my crevice. No, I would have died. He was more than capable of killing me if he were the one who had lured an Agwi here.

Of course, I didn't really resent the man. I resented myself for falling for it like an idiot.

"*Ha… ha…*"

I convinced myself that I was right, but the arrow I saw in front of me upon coming out of the crevice reduced me to tears.

- I'll see you once you make it out alive. Come and find me if you're willing to join me.

There was a note attached to the arrow, and the half loaf of bread that I had decided to give him was lying next to the arrow.

I stared at it for quite a while, gripping my sword tightly.

“Let’s survive.”

---

1. Kim Hyun-Sung’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 550
THE TUTORIAL IS STARTING (4)

“Status window,” I[1] said.

[Name - Kim Hyun-Sung]

[Title - None. Please work harder.]

[Age - 22]

[Nature - A Cowardly Dreamer]

[Job - Warrior - Average-rank]

[Stats]

[Strength - 11]

[Agility - 25]

[Stamina - 13]

[Intelligence - 10]

[Endurance - 19]

[Luck - 15]

[Magic - 03]

[Gear]

[A cheap iron sword that people wouldn't use even if it were given to them for free - Average-rank]

[A dagger that people wouldn't use even if it were given to them for free - Average-rank]

"I changed jobs. It was true," I mumbled.

I placed the dagger by my waist and sat down with my iron sword slung over my shoulder. The exhaustion that had been building up within me felt like it was melting away. Of course, I was still exhausted. I felt like I was standing on a field of sharp blades, and my dirty clothes annoyed me as well.

I looked around, wary of other monsters.

I quenched my thirst after confirming that there wasn't anything strange and smiled.

'I wonder how many more I need to kill to change jobs again.'

I wasn't certain because the amount of available information was limited, but I figured that I wouldn't have any issues hunting a few more monsters. The monster density here shouldn't be an issue as well since someone had already swept through this place.

That man and his comrades had gone through this place, so even if there were monsters here, I was sure that those monsters were stragglers that got lucky enough to get separated from their pack.

In other words, I could hunt safely.

I was aware that I would find it difficult to find them head-on. I had already realized that the monsters weren't as strong as I thought, but I was still afraid of them. I had experienced quite a few battles against them by now, but I was scared of facing them.

Their claws and fangs were sharp, and I knew that there was a limit to how many of them I could handle at once. If I got ambushed, I would definitely die. I gripped my throbbing left arm tightly, but my injury didn't heal.

‘I would have died if it hadn’t been for the dagger.’

A monster ambushed me, and I lost grip of my sword. If it hadn’t been for the dagger on my waist, I would have already been a corpse.

The description of the weapon said that it was basically garbage, but it was like a valuable treasure to someone without any other weapon.

I wasn’t sure how many of these weapons were in hyung and his comrades’ hands, but since there was no way I could turn back time and go back to when I had just arrived here, I had to treat the so-called garbage dagger as if it were a family heirloom.

At first, I thought hyung and his comrades were being unreasonable when they demanded my food in exchange for weapons, but now that I thought about it, it was a reasonable trade.

Actually, I thought that they were trying to be considerate.

‘I can’t do anything about my hunger… ’

I was sure that none of us had died of starvation just yet, but those monsters had definitely reaped at least a hundred lives by now. Who would be able to eat properly in our current situation? I could handle hunger, but I would die without a weapon.

Hyung was right. If we had to face something else after we were done with this tutorial dungeon, then I had to level up as many times as possible so that I would survive for a long time.

I cleaned my weapons with a rag, and it felt like it had been twenty minutes since I started resting. I stood up, thinking that it was about time for me to start moving once more.

However, I had no idea which way I was supposed to go, and I could no longer see arrows on the walls. I couldn’t help but think that something untoward happened, but I could see traces of a struggle here.

I wasn’t sure whether they fought monsters or other people, but it was clear that it had been an intense fight because they couldn’t draw the arrows.

'Should I take my time and look around?'

Unfortunately, I couldn't afford to make that decision. I wouldn't be able to catch up to hyung and his comrades if I were to stay here and look around. It was also better to just spend my time hunting while looking for clues at the same time.

I started walking, and…

"*Kyaaaah…*"

I heard a monster's cry.

Cold sweat rolled down my forehead, and my breathing became rough.

I could fight, but I was the one moving my body. I resented myself for becoming tense and nervous, but I had to swing my sword to survive. Hyung told me that I had to wield my weapon to survive.

I wasn't sure how many monsters were coming, but I only heard the cry of a single monster. I walked quietly and soon stumbled upon a monster crawling on four legs.

I gulped and grabbed my sword slowly. I started thinking about whether I should charge it or wait for it to come this way, but if possible, I would like to kill it without facing it head-on because I was still not strong enough to do something like that.

I decided to stick close to the wall and ambush it the moment it appeared in my line of sight. It happened in the blink of an eye, but I simulated the ambush scenario in my head hundreds of times.

Of course, I knew that my simulation wouldn't turn out to be accurate once the ambush started, but I still couldn't help but simulate it in my head.

A blunt force struck me, ripping me out of my train of thought.

"*Argh!*"

"*Kyaaaah!*"

I started rolling on the ground.

“Shit!” I cursed.

It was another monster. I rolled twice and recovered, but the monster was already running toward me while drooling.

‘I got lucky.’

I was lucky that the monster decided to ram my torso rather than my head. I examined it and saw that it was limping. It seemed that the monster wasn’t in the best condition as well.

‘Think. Just think. Think.’

I would sidestep to avoid the first monster, and then I would deal with the limping monster first. After killing the second monster, I would turn around and kill the first monster while it was still recovering from a failed charge.

These monsters would lose their balance after every failed charge, so I could take advantage of that to deal a fatal blow. Thousands of thoughts filled my mind in the proverbial blink of an eye, and my body moved to carry out the plan.

I would sidestep to avoid the charging first monster.

“*Kyaaaaaaaaah!*”

And stab the other one…

Thwik!

My sword pierced its head, and I looked back to the monster I had avoided and saw that it had already recovered and was charging at me once more.

‘I’ll cut it down… ’’

I attempted to pull my sword out…

“*Huh?!*”

My sword seemed like it was stuck, and I couldn’t pull it out.

"*Urgh… Urgh!*"

I used all my might to pull it out, but it was still stuck.

Meanwhile, the monster was already close to me. The only silver lining here was that the monster seemed like it still hadn't recovered from its failed charge because it struck my left leg rather than my head.

"*ARGH!*"

I screamed in excruciating pain and stabbed the monster in the head with the dagger on my waist, but the tip of my dagger slipped because its head was at an angle.

I ended up stabbing its shoulder, but such a superficial wound wouldn't stop it.

Actually, it shook its head furiously and bit my leg in fury.

I felt like the monster would rip my leg off. The pain was so intense that I started crying.

However, I endured the pain and raised my dagger desperately.

Sqwelp!

A grotesque noise echoed, and the monster went quiet

"*Ha… ha… ha…*"

I knew that every battle would be dangerous, but I almost died this time.

At this rate, it wouldn't be strange if I died in my next battle.

My confidence deflated as I tried to catch my breath.

"*Ugh…*"

I opened the mouth of the monster who perished with a dagger in its head, and its bodily fluids flooded out.

Fortunately, my leg looked fine. I reckoned that its fangs had become rotten from

eating human corpses.

I wrapped my leg with a cloth and started moving once more because someone might come here after hearing my screams.

I had to be careful.

'Let's keep it cool. Keep it cool.'

I kept repeating that in my head, but I couldn't stop trembling. I was still scared. I thought that I simply got lucky against them, and that was why I was still alive.

I was scared of the unexpected. I was scared that things might not go according to plan.

'I almost died. Seriously... I almost died... ' I quivered violently upon recalling the fact that I almost perished in the battle just now. *'My... sword. My sword... '*

I approached the limping monster. I was sure that it was limping after the humans injured it. It probably got separated from the pack after running away from the battlefield. Of course, there was also a chance that it simply lost the human that it had been chasing to kill.

'Which way did it come from?'

The path I had come from had already been cleared of monsters, so it had to have come from somewhere where people were fighting for their lives.

I examined its injury and deduced that it was caused by either a sword or a lance.

"It could be hyung and his comrades," I said. "There are traces of battle..."

It would make sense if this monster had truly gotten separated from its pack.

'There aren't any arrows anymore... '

I started thinking that perhaps this monster got left behind by its pack while chasing after hyung and his comrades because of its injuries.

'I have to help them!'

I had to repay their kindness. I tightened the cloth around my leg and limped my way toward where the monster had come from. It would be difficult for me to run, but I could still walk.

If hyung and his comrades were being chased by monsters, they would need all the help that they could get. They would probably be wary of me at first, but I was sure that they would feel relieved once I revealed that I was Kim Hyun-Sung.

I was frowning due to the pain, but I started smiling at the thought of meeting them once more.

Of course, I would have to save them first.

I had no idea how to follow the traces of battle, but it wasn't that difficult to follow the scratches on the walls and the footprints on the ground. I soon stumbled upon monster corpses, so I figured that a battle had to have occurred up ahead.

I wasn't certain, but it seemed like it hadn't been that long since these monsters perished. I made that presumption because their bodies were still warm.

It was difficult, but I picked up the pace. At some point, I found myself running to the point that I was starting to get exhausted. I wanted to thank him for encouraging me to exit the crevice and for giving me the dagger and the small iron sword.

I didn't know his name, and I didn't see his comrades as well.

All that I knew was that I wanted to apologize for calling him a bad person.

"Hyung… hyung!" I shouted.

'*Ah!*' I had to cover my mouth with my hands upon seeing the sight in front of me.

---

1. Kim Hyun-Sung's POV ☜

CHAPTER 551
THE TUTORIAL IS STARTING (5)

"Hang in there! Hang in there! We just have to hang in there, and we'll survive. Everyone, stay alert! Hang in there! We have the advantage!"

"*Kyaaaaaah!*"

"Shit! Die! Die! You shitheads!"

"*Ahhhhhhhh!*"

"Don't fall back. It'll be over the moment we show our backs to them. Don't fall out of formation! Don't be scared, you bastard! Stab it! Stab it! We can do this! It's easy!"

"*Kyaaaah!*"

"Hold up the shield! You fuckin' pig! Hold up your shield!"

Whoosh!

"My arm! My arm! *Aaaahhhhh!* Help me! Help… *Ahhhhhhhhh!*"

"Don't go in there to save them! Don't fall out of formation! Shit! I told you to stay in position, you idiots! You dumb bastards! Incompetent fools! Stay in formation!!! I'll kill all of you if you don't stay in formation!"

The party was completely surrounded by monsters. I[1] couldn't help but bite my lips when I saw them surrounded by so many monsters.

They were resisting, but they lacked numbers.

The monsters were being killed, but the Agwis seemed endless.

"Shit… You dumb bastards! Listen to me! *Ugh*, you guys are annoying!"

I thought about wielding my sword and attacking the monsters from the rear, but my legs wouldn't move.

I was frozen in place.

"*Uh… ah…*"

'I'm going to die.'

I was sure I would die if I went there—no, those monsters would definitely find and kill me if I made even the slightest noise. The party was still holding out because of their formation, but I was by myself.

I didn't have a shield to block attacks, and I wasn't in the best condition.

My leg was injured, and my left arm wouldn't budge. I had no stamina, so it would basically be suicide if I were to go out there and fight. If some of the monsters in the rear that were waiting for their turns turned toward me, I would die.

They would tear me apart without being to help the distressed party.

My breathing became rough, and my arms were trembling. I really wanted to run away and ensure my survival, but I also wanted to save them. After all, human beings were supposed to help others.

'I have to save them.'

Hyung saved me, so I had to return the favor in kind.

However…

'I-I think he's not hyung… '

His voice sounded different, but I actually couldn't remember his voice anymore. His manner of speech sounded familiar, but there was a chance that the distressed party didn't belong to hyung and his comrades.

I couldn't really quite confirm their voices because the monsters were too loud.

I started thinking about how I shouldn't justify things and that I should help them

even if they were strangers. After all, it was the right thing to do.

Unfortunately, my feet wouldn't move.

I made contact with one of their male members. I didn't really see his face, but our gazes definitely met. He looked relieved as if everything was going to be fine now that I was here.

'I have to help them.'

"H-Help…"

'I can fight with them.'

"I-I…"

'That's right. I only got this far because of Hyung.'

"I can… fight as…"

'Fight with them, you idiot!'

"Let's go… together…"

My body disappointed me. My body betrayed my thoughts because it turned around and made my legs run away as fast as possible.

I tried to rationalize my escape by saying that I wasn't in the best condition to fight, but I was actually just running away from that hell.

"*Ha, ha, kgh…* Fucking idiot*…!*"

Blood seeped out of the cloth around my leg, but my feet didn't stop moving.

"Kim Hyun-Sung, you stupid bastard! Coward, coward… *Kgh*, you deserve to die. You deserve it!" I cursed.

The tears in my eyes made everything blurry. I couldn't quite describe my emotions, but one thing was for sure.

I was relieved that I didn't make the decision to help them.

However, I couldn't stop crying.

I was an idiot and a cowardly bastard.

I didn't deserve to live, and I would not be able to take a step forward after all this.

I had betrayed and abandoned my benefactor. I had abandoned him just like how I had abandoned those who were crying out for help while I was in that crevice. I had betrayed them and myself.

A part of me was saying that it was about time I stopped running because I was already in a safe place, but a part of me was terrified—saying that I had to run a bit farther and that I had to make sure I would survive all this to continue playing the game.

Soon, I stopped running. I looked around and saw that I was already far away from the hell I had abandoned. However, I continued moving forward. I had no idea why, but I didn't feel comfortable just standing around.

And that was when I saw a faint arrow on the wall.

"*Ah…"* There was no way I could have found that arrow earlier. *'He didn't forget me.'*

It seemed that he knew that I was following him. Tears filled my eyes once again, and I tightened my grip around my sword while biting my lips. I couldn't think of anything else, and I suddenly found myself running back to the hell I had abandoned earlier.

"*Ha… ha…"*

'He has to be alive!'

"*Ha… ha… ha…"*

'I'm sure they're still fighting. I'm sure they're still alive!'

"Hyung… hyung!" I called out.

'I'm sure he's still alive. Please… please be alive.'

"Please be alive. Please… please, I beg you. Please be alive," I begged.

'I'm sure he's alive. Please, I even got a job change. I'm going to tell him that I'll fight with him.'

'Yeah, I'll do that.'

"Y-You bastards! You fucking bastards…!!" I shouted.

I swung my sword.

'Think… '

I decided to cut its head off.

'I have to think… '

"*Ahhhhhhhhh!*"

"*Kyaaaaaah!*"

I shouldn't stop swinging my sword. I had to cut their heads with one attack because I couldn't allow my sword to get stuck in their flesh, and I also couldn't allow them to stop me.

'I can't afford to think about anything else. It should be easy. I can see everything.'

"You bastards! Hyung! Hyung…! I'm here! Hang on… just a bit longer!" I shouted.

"*Kyaaaah!*"

Monsters attacked me from all directions, but I dodged them with a few side steps.

'I can do it.'

I was more agile and stronger than them.

'You have it all in your head. You know how to swing, how to dodge, how to block, and

how to use a sword.'

Now that I thought about it, it wasn't really that hard because I had done this many times before in a game. Yes, I just had to think of all this as a game.

I just had to think that I was pressing a button to cast a skill, but instead of pressing a button with my finger to use a skill, I had to do it with my body.

I decapitated a monster on my left flank. I stepped backward and dodged a monster that was targeting my leg, but I didn't stop moving. I had to keep moving, or they would surround me.

I decided to do just that, and I kept moving while killing the monsters.

It wasn't that difficult because my sword had a longer reach than their arms. I just had to ensure that there was a certain distance between me and the monsters. If they managed to cross over that threshold, I would stab them with my dagger.

My face was drenched in the blood of these monsters, but I didn't have the luxury to wipe my face clean. I started to run out of breath, but I had to keep moving. It was difficult; my heart felt like it was going to explode, but I endured the pain by screaming.

"*Ahhhh!* Bastards! Come at me! Bastards! Scums! Hyung! Hyung! I'm here! It's Kim Hyun-Sung! Kim Hyun-Sung! I'm here! 22-year-old Kim Hyun-Sung is here…! I can help you! I'll help!" I yelled.

Unfortunately, things would sometimes go awry, and my sword got stuck while trying to decapitate a monster. However, I reacted quickly and kicked it away. Then, I put more strength into my swing by using my waist to rotate. I drew another circle with my sword, and the monster's head fell to the ground with a dull thud.

'I can't stand still.'

"I'm faster…" I said.

"I'm faster…!" I shouted.

"A bit faster… I'm faster!" I repeated.

‘If I go even faster… I’ll become too fast for me to think about my movements.’

“It doesn't matter,” I said decisively.

I didn’t have to think. I just had to become faster and swing my sword even faster.

[Agility has increased by 1.]

I also didn’t have to think about where my attack should land. I was faster than them, anyway, so I could just retract my sword and give them another swing.

[Agility has increased by 1.]

I decided to abandon target priority—no, I decided to abandon all thought processes. I just had to rely on my instincts. The information I needed was already in my head, so thinking about my next actions would only slow me down.

It would be nice if someone would tell me where and how I should swing my sword, but I didn’t have someone like that. Fortunately, it didn’t really matter because I was faster than these monsters to the extent that they couldn’t hit me anymore.

[Agility has increased by 1.]

“You bastards… You scum…!” I shouted.

[You have obtained a new job.]

“Hyung! Hyung! Hyuuung!” I called out.

[You have obtained the Average-rank job, Swordsman.]

“I’m faster! I’m faster!” I shouted.

Brand-new knowledge filled my head, and it made my sword even sharper. My movements became more refined as well. My limbs felt heavy from the exertion, and I was starting to find it difficult to move, but I didn’t stop moving.

The decreasing number of monsters motivated me, and I was sure that the people who were still fighting inside the chamber felt the same. I was sure they were feeling hopeful.

There were still ten monsters in the middle of the chamber. I saw an opening and made my way over there. I felt like vomiting my lungs out from the exertion, but I insisted on swinging my sword.

The remaining monsters collapsed, and I could finally take a closer look at the party.

“Hyung! Hyung…! It’s me! I’m here to save you!” I shouted.

The survivors were buried beneath a hill of monster corpses, so I had to remove the corpses one by one.

“Hyung!” I called out.

However, I didn’t hear any response.

“Hyung… hyung!” I called out once more.

I saw a few unrecognizable corpses buried in the hill of monster corpses.

“*Ah… Ahhh… Ahh…*”

Their expressions were miserable and distorted.

Their lifeless eyes were staring at me, and it seemed like they were asking why I abandoned them and ran away.

"*Kgh…"*

Why did I even run?

"I'm sorry… *Heuk…* I'm sorry… I'm sorry…" I said.

Why couldn't I be braver?

"*Heuk… heuk…"*

Why did I even run?

Tears rolled down my cheeks. The corpses were unrecognizable. They all looked like a pile of human flesh, and I thought perhaps he wasn't in this party, but…

"*Ahh…"*

I saw a corpse holding a bag, and all I could do was cry with him in my arms.

"*Heuk… Kgh…!*"

"I'll see you next time if you're still alive."

"Hyuuung…! I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry…!" I cried out.

"Come and find me if you're willing to join me."

"*Aargh! Aaaaaah!* Hyuuuuuuung…!" I screamed.

He did not respond to me.

"*Aaaaaahhhhhh!*"

1. Kim Hyun-Sung's POV ☜

PDF by: traitorAIZEN